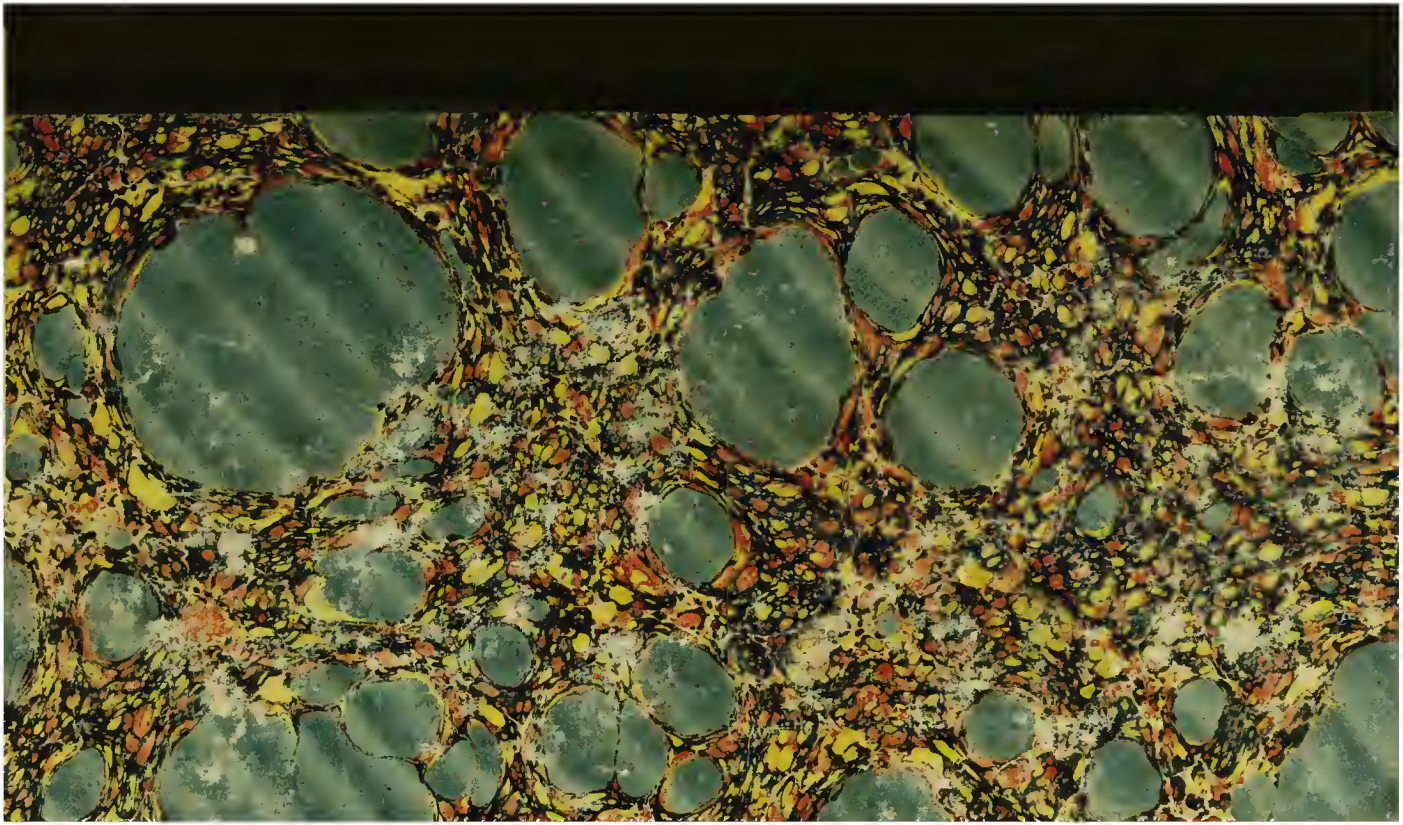


CONINGSBY;

OR, THE

NEW GENERATION.

BY

B. DISRAELI, ESQ. M.P.

AUTHOR OF "CONTARINI FLEMING."

IN THREE VOLS.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER;
GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1844.

LONDON:
Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.

CONINGSBY.

BOOK VI.

CHAPTER I.

THE knowledge that Sidonia was at Paris greatly agitated Lady Monmouth. She received the intimation indeed from Coningsby at dinner with sufficient art to conceal her emotion. Lord Monmouth himself was quite pleased at the announcement. Sidonia was his especial favourite; he knew so much, had such an excellent judgment, and was so rich. He had always

something to tell you, was the best man in the world to bet on, and never wanted anything. A perfect character according to the Monmouth ethics.

In the evening of the day that Coningsby met Sidonia, Lady Monmouth made a little visit to the charming Duchess de G——t who was "at home" every other night in her pretty hotel, with its embroidered white satin draperies, its fine old cabinets, and ancestral portraits of famous name, brave marshals and bright princesses of the olden time, on its walls. These receptions without form, yet full of elegance, are what English "at homes" were before the continental war, though now, by a curious perversion of terms, the easy domestic title distinguishes in England a formally prepared and elaborately collected assembly, in which everything and every person are careful to be as little "homely" as possible. In France, on the contrary, 'tis on these occasions, and in this manner, that society carries on that degree and kind of intercourse which in England we attempt awkwardly to maintain by the medium

of that unpopular species of visitation styled a morning call; which all complain that they have either to make or to endure.

Nowhere was this species of reception more happily conducted than at the Duchess de G——t. The rooms though small, decorated with taste, brightly illumined; a handsome and gracious hostess, the Duke the very pearl of gentlemen, and sons and daughters worthy of such parents. Every moment some one came in, and some one went away. In your way from a dinner to a ball, you stopped to exchange agreeable "on dits." It seemed that every woman was pretty, every man a wit. Sure you were to find yourself surrounded by celebrities, and men were welcomed there if they were clever before they were famous, which showed it was a house that regarded intellect, and did not seek merely to gratify its vanity by being surrounded by the distinguished.

Enveloped in a rich Indian shawl and leaning back on a sofa, Lady Monmouth was engaged in conversation with the courtly and classic Count M—é, when on casually turning her head, she

observed entering the saloon, Sidonia. She just caught his form bowing to the Duchess, and instantly turned her head and replunged into her conversation with increased interest. Lady Monmouth was a person who had the power of seeing all about her, everything and everybody, without appearing to look. She was conscious that Sidonia was approaching her neighbourhood. Her heart beat in tumult; she dreaded to catch the eye of that very individual whom she was so anxious to meet. He was advancing towards the sofa. Instinctively Lady Monmouth turned from the Count, and began speaking earnestly to her other neighbour, a young daughter of the house, innocent and beautiful, not yet quite fledged, trying her wings in society under the maternal eye. She was surprised by the extreme interest which her grand neighbour suddenly took in all her pursuits, her studies, her daily walks in the Bois de Boulogne. Sidonia, as the Marchioness had anticipated, had now reached the sofa. But no, it was to the Count and not to Lady Monmouth that he was advancing; and they were immediately engaged in conver-

sation. After some little time when she had become accustomed to his voice, and found her own heart throbbing with less violence, Lucretia turned again, as if by accident to the Count, and met the glance of Sidonia. She meant to have received him with haughtiness, but her self-command deserted her; and slightly rising from the sofa, she welcomed him with a countenance of extreme pallor and with some awkwardness.

His manner was such as might have assisted her, even had she been more troubled. It was marked by a degree of respectful friendliness. He expressed without reserve his pleasure at meeting her again; inquired much how she had passed her time since they last parted; asked more than once after the Marquess. The Count moved away; Sidonia took his seat. His ease and homage combined very greatly relieved her. She expressed to him how kind her Lord would consider his society, for the Marquess had suffered in health since Sidonia last saw him. His periodical gout had left him, which made him ill and nervous. The Marquess received his friends at dinner every day.

Sidonia particularly amiable, offered himself as a guest for the following one.

"And do you go to the great ball to-morrow?" inquired Lucretia, delighted with all that had occurred.

"I always go to their balls," said Sidonia, "I have promised."

There was a momentary pause; Lucretia, happier than she had been for a long time, her face a little flushed, and truly in a secret tumult of sweet thoughts, remembered she had been long there, and offering her hand to Sidonia, bade him adieu until to-morrow. While he, as was his custom, soon repaired to the refined circle of the Countess de C—s—l—ne a lady, whose manners he always mentioned as his fair ideal, and whose house was his favourite haunt.

Before to-morrow comes, a word or two respecting two other characters of this history connected with the family of Lord Monmouth. And first of Flora. "La Petite" was neither very well nor very happy. Her hereditary disease developed itself; gradually, but in a man-

ner alarming to those who loved her. She was very delicate, and suffered so much from the weakness of her chest, that she was obliged to relinquish singing. This was really the only tie between her and the Marchioness, who without being a petty tyrant, treated her often with unfeeling haughtiness. She was therefore now rarely seen in the chambers of the great. In her own apartments she found indeed some distraction in music, for which she had a natural predisposition, but this was a pursuit that only fed the morbid passion of her tender soul. Alone, listening only to sweet sounds, or indulging in soft dreams that never could be realized, her existence glided away like a vision, and she seemed to become every day more fair and fragile. Alas! hers was the sad and mystic destiny to love one whom she never met, and by whom if she met him, she would scarcely perhaps be recognised. Yet in that passion, fanciful, almost ideal, her life was absorbed, nor for her did the world contain an existence, a thought, a sensation, beyond those that sprang from the image of the noble youth who had sympathized with her in her sorrows,

and had softened the hard fortunes of dependence by his generous sensibility. Happy that with many mortifications, it was still her lot to live under the roof of one who bore his name, and in whose veins flowed the same blood! She felt indeed for the Marquess, whom she so rarely saw, and from whom she had never received much notice, prompted it would seem by her fantastic passion, a degree of reverence, almost of affection, which seemed occasionally even to herself as something inexplicable and without reason.

As for her fond stepfather, M. Villebecque, the world fared very differently with him. His lively and enterprising genius, his ready and multiform talents, and his temper which defied disturbance, had made their way. He had become the very right hand of Lord Monmouth; his only counsellor, his only confidant; his secret agent; the minister of his will. And well did Villebecque deserve this trust, and ably did he maintain himself in the difficult position which he achieved. There was nothing which Villebecque did not know, nothing which he could not do, especially at Paris. He was mas-

ter of his subject; in all things the secret of success, and without which however they may from accident dazzle the world, the statesman, the orator, the author, all alike feel the damning consciousness of being charlatans.

Coningsby had made a visit to M. Villebecque and Flora the day after his arrival. It was a recollection and a courtesy that evidently greatly gratified them. Villebecque talked very much and amusingly; and Flora, whom Coningsby frequently addressed, very little, though she listened with great earnestness. Coningsby told her that he thought from all he heard she was too much alone, and counselled her to gaiety. But nature that had made her mild, had denied her that constitutional liveliness of being which is the graceful property of French women. She was a lilly of the valley, that loved seclusion, and the tranquillity of virgin glades. Almost every day as he passed their entresol, Coningsby would look into Villebecque's apartments for a moment to ask after Flora.

CHAPTER II.

SIDONIA was to dine at Lord Monmouth's the day after he met Lucretia, and afterwards they were all to meet at a ball much talked of, and to which invitations were much sought; and which was to be given that evening by the Baroness S. de R——d.

Lord Monmouth's dinners at Paris were celebrated. It was generally agreed that they had no rivals; yet there were others who had as skilful cooks, others who for such a purpose were equally profuse in their expenditure. What then was the secret spell of his success? The simplest in the world, though no one

seemed aware of it. His Lordship's plates were always hot: whereas at Paris, in the best appointed houses, and at dinners, which for costly materials and admirable art in their preparation, cannot be surpassed, the effect is always considerably lessened, and by a mode the most mortifying—by the mere circumstance that every one at a French dinner is served on a cold plate. The reason of a custom, or rather a necessity, which one would think a nation so celebrated for their gastronomical taste would recoil from, is really, it is believed, that the ordinary French porcelain is so very inferior, that it cannot endure the preparatory heat for dinner. The common white pottery, for example, which is in general use, and always found at the cafés, will not bear vicinage to a brisk kitchen fire for half an hour. Now if we only had that treaty of commerce with France which has been so often on the point of completion, the fabrics of our unrivalled potteries, in exchange for their capital wines, would be found throughout France. The dinners of both nations would be improved: the English

would gain a delightful beverage, and the French for the first time in their lives would dine off hot plates. An unanswerable instance of the advantages of commercial reciprocity!

The guests at Lord Monmouth's to-day were chiefly Carlists, individuals bearing illustrious names, that animate the page of history, and are indissolubly bound up with the glorious annals of their great country. They are the phantoms of a past, but real aristocracy; an aristocracy that was founded on an intelligible principle; which claimed great privileges for great purposes; whose hereditary duties were such, that their possessors were perpetually in the eye of the nation, and who maintained and, in a certain point of view, justified their pre-eminence by constant illustration.

It pleased Lord Monmouth to show great courtesies to a fallen race with whom he sympathized; whose fathers had been his friends in the days of his hot youth; whose mothers he had made love to; whose palaces had been his home; whose brilliant fêtes he remembered; whose fanciful splendour excited his early

imagination; and whose magnificent and wanton luxury had developed his own predisposition for boundless enjoyment. Soubise and his suppers; his cutlets and his mistresses; the profuse and embarrassed De Laraguais, who sighed for "entire ruin," as for a strange luxury, which perpetually eluded his grasp; these were the heroes of the olden time that Lord Monmouth worshipped; the wisdom of our ancestors which he appreciated; and he turned to their recollection for relief from the vulgar prudence of the degenerate days on which he had fallen: days when nobles must be richer than other men, or they cease to have any distinction.

It was impossible not to be struck by the effective appearance of Lady Monmouth as she received her guests in grand toilet preparatory to the ball; white satin and minever, a brilliant tiara. Her fine form, her costume of a fashion as perfect as its materials were sumptuous, and her presence always commanding and distinguished, produced a general effect to which few could be insensible. It

was the triumph of mien over mere beauty of countenance.

The hotel of Madame S. de R——d is not more distinguished by its profuse decoration, than by the fine taste which has guided the vast expenditure. Its halls of arabesque are almost without a rival; there is not the slightest embellishment in which the hand and feeling of art are not recognized. The rooms were very crowded; everybody distinguished in Paris was there: the lady of the Court, the duchess of the Faubourg, the wife of the rich financier, the constitutional Throne, the old Monarchy, the modern Bourse were alike represented. Marshals of the Empire, Ministers of the Crown, Dukes and Marquises, whose ancestors lounged in the Œil de Bœuf; diplomatists of all countries, eminent foreigners of all nations, deputies who led sections, members of learned and scientific academies, occasionally a stray poet; a sea of sparkling tiaras, brilliant bouquets, glittering stars, and glowing ribbands, many beautiful faces, many famous ones: unquestionably the general air of a first-rate Parisian saloon, on a

great occasion, is not easily equalled. In London there is not the variety of guests; nor the same size and splendour of saloons. Our houses are too small for reception.

Coningsby, who had stolen away from his grandfather's before the rest of the guests, was delighted with the novelty of the splendid scene. He had been in Paris long enough to make some acquaintances, and mostly with celebrated personages. In his long-fruitless endeavour to enter the saloon in which they danced, he found himself hustled against the illustrious Baron von H—t, whom he had sat next to at dinner a few days before at Count M—é's.

"It is more difficult than cutting through the Isthmus of Panama, Baron," said Coningsby, alluding to a past conversation.

"Infinitely," replied M. de H., smiling; "for I would undertake to cut through the Isthmus, and I cannot engage that I shall enter this ball-room."

Time however brought Coningsby into that brilliant chamber. What a blaze of light and loveliness! How coquettish are the costumes!

How vivid the flowers! To sounds of stirring melody, beautiful beings move with grace. Grace indeed is beauty in action.

Here where all are fair and everything is attractive, his eye is suddenly arrested by one object—a form of surpassing grace among the graceful, among the beauteous, a countenance of unrivalled beauty.

She was young among the youthful; a face of sunshine amid all that artificial light; her head placed upon her finely moulded shoulders with a queen-like grace; a coronet of white roses on her dark brown hair; her only ornament. It was the beauty of the picture gallery.

The eye of Coningsby never quitted her. When the dance ceased, he had an opportunity of seeing her nearer. He met her walking with her cavalier, and he was conscious that she observed him. Finally, he remarked that she resumed a seat next to the lady, whom he had mistaken for her mother, but had afterwards understood to be Lady Wallinger.

Coningsby returned to the other saloons; he witnessed the entrance and reception of Lady

Monmouth, who moved on towards the ball-room. Soon after this, Sidonia arrived; he came in with the still handsome and ever courteous Duke D——s. Observing Coningsby, he stopped to present him to the Duke. While thus conversing, the Duke, who is very fond of the English, observed: "See, here is your beautiful countrywoman, that all the world are talking of. That is her uncle. He brings to me letters from one of your lords, whose name I cannot recollect."

And Sir Joseph and his lovely niece veritably approached. The Duke addressed them: asked them in the name of his Duchess to a concert on the next Thursday; and after a thousand compliments moved on. Sidonia stopped; Coningsby could not refrain from lingering, but stood a little apart, and was about to move away, when there was a whisper, of which, without hearing a word, he could not resist the impression that he was the subject. He felt a little embarrassed, and was retiring, when he heard Sidonia reply to an inquiry of the lady, "The same," and then turning to Coningsby,

said aloud: "Coningsby, Miss Millbank says that you have forgotten her."

Coningsby started, advanced, coloured a little, could not conceal his surprise. The lady too though more prepared, was not without confusion, and for an instant looked down. Coningsby recalled at that moment the long dark eye-lashes and the beautiful, bashful, countenance that had so charmed him at Millbank; but two years had otherwise effected a wonderful change in the sister of his school-day friend, and transformed the silent, embarrassed girl into a woman of surpassing beauty and of the most graceful and impressive mien.

"It is not surprising that Mr. Coningsby should not recollect my niece," said Sir Joseph addressing Sidonia, and wishing to cover their mutual embarrassment; "but it is impossible for her or for any one connected with her, not to be anxious at all times to express to him our sense of what we all owe him."

Coningsby and Miss Millbank were now in full routine conversation, consisting of questions; how long she had been at Paris; when she had

heard last from Millbank; how her father was; also, how was her brother. Sidonia made an observation to Sir Joseph on a passer-by, and then himself moved on; Coningsby accompanying his new friends in a contrary direction, to the refreshment room to which they were proceeding.

"And you have passed a winter at Rome," said Coningsby. "How I envy you! I feel that I shall never be able to travel!"

"And why not?"

"Life has become so stirring, that there is ever some great cause that keeps one at home."

"Life, on the contrary, so swift, that all may see now that of which they once could only read."

"The gold and silver sides of the shield," said Coningsby with a smile.

"And you, like a good knight will maintain your own."

"No, I would follow yours."

"You have not heard lately from Oswald?"

"Oh, yes; I think there are no such faithful

correspondents as we are; I only wish we could meet."

"You will soon; but he is such a devotee of Oxford; quite a monk; and you, too, Mr. Coningsby are much occupied."

"Yes, and at the same time as Millbank. I was in hopes when I once paid you a visit, I might have found your brother."

"But that was such a rapid visit," said Miss Millbank.

"I always remember it with delight," said Coningsby.

"You were willing to be pleased; but Millbank notwithstanding Rome commands my affections, and in spite of this surrounding splendour, I could have wished to have passed my Christmas in Lancashire.

"Mr. Millbank has lately purchased a very beautiful place in the county. I became acquainted with Hellingsley when staying at my grandfather's."

"Ah! I have never seen it; indeed, I was very much surprised that papa became its purchaser, because he never will live

there; and Oswald I am sure could never be tempted to quit Millbank. You know what enthusiastic ideas he has of his order?"

"Like all his ideas; sound, and high, and pure. I always duly appreciated your brother's great abilities, and what is far more important, his lofty mind. When I recollect our Eton days, I cannot understand how more than two years have passed away without our being together. I am sure the fault is mine. I might now have been at Oxford instead of Paris. And, yet," added Coningsby, "that would have been a sad mistake, since I should not have had the happiness of being here."

"Oh, yes, that would have been a sad mistake," said Miss Millbank.

"Edith," said Sir Joseph, rejoining his niece, from whom he had been momentarily separated, "Edith, that is Monsieur Thiers."

In the meantime Sidonia reached the ball-room, and sitting near the entrance was Lady Monmouth, who immediately addressed him. He was as usual intelligent and unimpassioned, and yet not without a delicate deference which

is flattering to women, especially if not altogether unworthy of it. Sidonia always admired Lucretia, and preferred her society to that of most persons. But the lady was in error in supposing that she had conquered or could vanquish his heart. Sidonia was one of those men, not so rare as may be supposed, who shrink above all things from an adventure of gallantry with a woman in a position. He had neither time nor temper for sentimental circumvolutions. He detested the diplomacy of passion: protocols, protracted negociations, conferences, correspondence, treaties projected, ratified, violated. He had no genius for the tactics of intrigue; your reconnoiterings, and marchings, and counter-marchings, sappings and minings, assaults, sometimes surrenders and sometimes repulses. All the solemn and studied hypocrisies were to him infinitely wearisome; and if the movements were not merely formal, they irritated him, distracted his feelings, disturbed the tenor of his mind, deranged his nervous system. Something of the old Oriental vein influenced him in his carriage towards women. He was oftener behind the scenes of the

Opera House than in his box; he delighted too in the society of ἑταῖραι; Aspasia was his heroine. Obliged to appear much in what is esteemed pure society, he cultivated the acquaintance of clever women because they interested him; but in such saloons his feminine acquaintances were merely psychological. No lady could accuse him of trifling with her feelings, however decided might be his predilection for her conversation. He yielded at once to an admirer; never trespassed by any chance into the domain of sentiment; never broke by any accident of blunder into the irregular paces of flirtation; was a man who notoriously would never diminish by marriage the purity of his race; and one who always maintained that passion and polished life were quite incompatible. He liked the drawing-room, and he liked the desart, but he would not consent that either should trench on their mutual privileges.

The Princess Lucretia had yielded herself to the spell of Sidonia's society at Coningsby Castle, when she knew that marriage was impossible. But she loved him; and with an Italian spirit.

Now they met again and she was the Marchioness of Monmouth, a very great lady, very much admired, and followed, and courted, and very powerful. It is our great moralist who tells us in the immortal page that an affair of gallantry with a great lady is more delightful than with ladies of a lower degree. In this he contradicts the good old ballad; but certain it is, that Dr. Johnson announced to Boswell, "Sir, in the case of a Countess the imagination is more excited."

But Sidonia was a man on whom the conventional superiorities of life produced as little effect as a flake falling on the glaciers of the High Alps. His comprehension of the world and human nature was too vast and complete; he understood too well the relative value of things, to appreciate anything but essential excellence; and that not too much. A charming woman was not more charming to him because she chanced to be an empress in a particular district of one of the smallest planets; a charming woman under any circumstances was not an unique animal. When Sidonia felt a dis-

position to be spell-bound, he used to review in his memory all the charming women of whom he had read in the books of all literatures, and whom he had known himself in every court and clime, and the result of his reflections ever was, that the charming woman in question was by no means the paragon, which some who had read, seen, and thought less, might be inclined to esteem her. There was indeed no subject on which Sidonia discoursed so felicitously as on woman: nor none on which Lord Eskdale more frequently endeavoured to attract him. He would tell you Talmudical stories about our mother Eve and the Queen of Sheba which would have astonished you. There was not a free lady of Greece; Leontium and Phryne, Lais, Danae, and Lamia; the Egyptian girl Thonis; respecting whom he could not tell you as many diverting tales as if they were ladies of Loretto; not a nook of Athenæus, not an obscure scholiast, not a passage in a Greek orator, which could throw light on these personages, which was not at his command. What stories he would tell you about Marc

Anthony and the actress Cytheris in their chariot drawn by tigers! What a character would he paint of that Flora who gave her gardens to the Roman people! It would draw tears to your eyes. No man was ever so learned in the female manners of the last centuries of polytheism as Sidonia. You would have supposed that he had devoted his studies peculiarly to that period, if you had not chanced to draw him to the Italian middle ages. And even those startling revelations were almost eclipsed by his anecdotes of the Court of Henry III. of France, with every character of which he was as familiar as with the brilliant groups that at this moment filled the saloons of Madame de R——d.

CHAPTER III.

THE image of Edith Millbank was the last thought of Coningsby as he sank into an agitated slumber. To him had hitherto in general been accorded the precious boon of dreamless sleep. Homer tells us these phantasmas come from Jove; they are rather the children of a distracted soul. Coningsby this night lived much in past years, varied by painful perplexities of the present, which he could neither subdue, nor comprehend. The scene flitted from Eton to the castle of his grandfather; and then he found himself among the pictures of the Rue de Tronchet, but their owner

bore the features of the senior Millbank. A beautiful countenance that was alternately the face in the mysterious picture, and then that of Edith, haunted him under all circumstances. He woke little refreshed; restless and yet sensible of some secret joy.

He woke to think of her of whom he had dreamed. The light had dawned on his soul. Coningsby loved.

Ah! what is that ambition, that haunts our youth—that thirst for power or that lust of fame, that forces us from obscurity into the sunblaze of the world—what are these sentiments so high, so vehement, so ennobling! They vanish, and in an instant, before the glance of a woman!

Coningsby had scarcely quitted her side the preceding eve. He hung upon the accents of that clear sweet voice, and sought with tremulous fascination, the gleaming splendour of those soft dark eyes. And now he sat in his chamber with his eyes fixed upon vacancy. All thoughts and feelings, pursuits, desires, life, merge in one absorbing sentiment.

It is impossible to exist without seeing her again, and instantly. He had requested and gained permission to call on Lady Wallinger; he would not lose a moment in availing himself of it. As early as was tolerably decorous, and before in all probability they could quit their hotel, Coningsby repaired to the Rue de Rivoli to pay his respects to his new friends.

As he walked along, he indulged in fanciful speculations which connected Edith and the mysterious portrait of his mother. He felt himself as it were near the fulfilment of some fate, and on the threshold of some critical discovery. He recalled the impatient, even alarmed, expressions of Rigby at Montem six years ago, when he proposed to invite young Millbank to his grandfather's dinner; the vindictive feud that existed between the two families; and for which political opinion, or even party passion could not satisfactorily account; and he reasoned himself into a conviction, that the solution of many perplexities was at hand, and that all would be consummated to the satisfaction of every one, by his unexpected but inevitable agency.

Coningsby found Sir Joseph alone. The worthy Baronet was at any rate no participator in Mr. Millbank's vindictive feelings against Lord Monmouth. On the contrary, he had a very high respect for a Marquess, whatever might be his opinions, and no mean consideration for a Marquess' grandson. Sir Joseph had inherited a large fortune made by commerce, and had increased it by the same means. He was a middle-class Whig, had faithfully supported that party in his native town during the days they wandered in the wilderness, and had well earned his share of the milk and honey when they vanquished the promised land. In the spring-tide of Liberalism, when the world was not analytical of free opinions, and odious distinctions were not drawn between Finality men and progressive Reformers, Mr. Wallinger had been the popular leader of a powerful body of his fellow citizens, who had returned him to the first Reform Parliament, and where in spite of many a menacing Registration, he had contrived to remain. He had never given a Radical vote without the permission of the Secretary of

the Treasury; and was not afraid of giving an unpopular one to serve his friends. He was not like that distinguished Liberal, who after dining with the late Whig Premier expressed his gratification and his gratitude by assuring his Lordship that he might count on his support on all popular questions.

"I want men who will support the government on all unpopular questions," replied the witty statesman.

Mr. Wallinger was one of these men. His high character and strong purse were always in the front rank in the hour of danger. His support in the house was limited to his votes; but in other places equally important, at a meeting at a political club, or in Downing Street, he could find his tongue, take what is called a "practical" view of a question, adopt what is called an "independent tone," re-animate confidence in ministers, check mutiny, and set a bright and bold example to the wavering. A man of his property, and high character, and sound views, so practical and so independent—this was, evidently, the block from which a

Baronet should be cut, and in due time he figured Sir Joseph.

A Spanish gentleman, of very ample means, and of a very good Catalan family, flying during a political convulsion to England, arrived with his two daughters at Liverpool, and bore letters of introduction to the house of Wallinger. Some little time after this, by one of those stormy vicissitudes of political fortune, of late years not unusual in the Peninsula, he returned to his native country, and left his children and the management of that portion of his fortune that he had succeeded in bringing with him, under the guardianship of the father of the present Sir Joseph. This gentleman was about again to become an exile, when he met with an untimely end in one of those terrible tumults of which Barcelona is the frequent scene.

The younger Wallinger was touched by the charms of one of his father's wards. Her beauty, of a character to which he was unaccustomed, her accomplishments of society, and the refinement of her manners conspicuous in the circle in which he lived, captivated him; and

though they had no heir, the union had been one of great felicity. Sir Joseph was proud of his wife; he secretly considered himself, though his "tone" was as liberal and independent as in old days, to be on the threshold of aristocracy, and was conscious that Lady Wallinger played her part not unworthily in the elevated circles in which they now frequently found themselves. Sir Joseph was fond of great people; and not averse to travel; because bearing a title and being a member of the British Parliament, and always moving with the appendages of wealth, servants, and carriages, and couriers, and fortified with no lack of letters from the Foreign Office, he was everywhere acknowledged and received, and treated as a personage; was invited to court-balls, dined with ambassadors, and found himself and his lady at every festival of distinction.

The elder Millbank had been Joseph Wallinger's youthful friend. Different as were their dispositions and the rate of their abilities, their political opinions were the same; and commerce habitually connected their interests. During a

visit to Liverpool, Millbank had made the acquaintance of the sister of Lady Wallinger, and had been a successful suitor for her hand. This lady was the mother of Edith, and of the school-fellow of Coningsby. It was only within a very few years that she had died; she had scarcely lived long enough to complete the education of her daughter, to whom she was devoted, and on whom she lavished the many accomplishments that she possessed. Lady Wallinger having no children, and being very fond of her niece, had watched over Edith with infinite solicitude, and finally had persuaded Mr. Millbank that it would be well that his daughter should accompany them in their somewhat extensive travels. It was not therefore only that nature had developed a beautiful woman out of a bashful girl since Coningsby's visit to Millbank; but really, every means and every opportunity that could contribute in rendering an individual capable of adorning the most accomplished circles of life had naturally, and without effort, fallen to the fortunate lot of the manufacturer's daughter. Edith possessed an intelli-

gence equal to those occasions. Without losing the native simplicity of her character, which sprang from the heart, and which the strong and original bent of her father's mind had fostered, she had imbibed all the refinement and facility of the polished circles in which she moved. She had a clear head, a fine taste, and a generous spirit; had received so much admiration, that, though by no means insensible to homage, her heart was free; was strongly attached to her family; and notwithstanding all the splendour of Rome and the brilliancy of Paris, her thoughts were often in her Saxon valley, amid the green hills and busy factories of Millbank.

Sir Joseph, finding himself alone with the grandson of Lord Monmouth, was not very anxious that the ladies should immediately appear. He thought this a very good opportunity of getting at what he called "the real feelings of the Tory party;" and he began to pump with a seductive semblance of frankness. For his part, he had never doubted that a Conservative government was ultimately inevitable; had told

Lord John so two years ago, and between themselves Lord John was of the same opinion. The present position of the Whigs was the necessary fate of all progressive parties; could not see exactly how it would end; thought sometimes it must end in a fusion of parties; but could not well see how that could be brought about, at least at present. For his part, should be very happy to witness an union of the best men of all parties, for the preservation of peace and order, without any reference to any particular opinions. And, in that sense of the word, it was not at all impossible he might find it his duty some day to support a Conservative government.

Sir Joseph was very much astonished when Coningsby, who being somewhat impatient for the entrance of the ladies was rather more abrupt than his wont, told the worthy Baronet that he looked upon a government without distinct principles of policy, as only a stop-gap to a wide-spread and demoralizing anarchy; that he for one could not comprehend how a free government could endure without national

opinions to uphold it; and that governments for the preservation of peace and order, and nothing else, had better be sought in China, or among the Austrians, the Chinese of Europe. As for Conservative government, the natural question was, What do you mean to conserve? Do you mean to conserve things or only names, realities or merely appearances? Or, do you mean to continue the system commenced in 1834, and, with a hypocritical reverence for the principles, and a superstitious adhesion to the forms, of the old exclusive constitution, carry on your policy by latitudinarian practice?

Sir Joseph stared; it was the first time that any inkling of the views of the New Generation had caught his ear. They were strange and unaccustomed accents. He was extremely perplexed; could by no means make out what his companion was driving at; at length, with a rather knowing smile, expressive as much of compassion as comprehension, he remarked:

"Ah! I see; you are a regular Orangeman."

"I look upon an Orangeman," said Coningsby, "as a pure Whig; the only professor and practiser of unadulterated Whiggism."

This was too much for Sir Joseph, whose political knowledge did not reach much further back than the ministry of the Mediocrities; hardly touched the times of the Corresponding Society. But he was a cautious man, and never replied in haste. He was about feeling his way, when he experienced the golden advantage of gaining time, for the ladies entered.

The heart of Coningsby throbbed as Edith appeared. She extended to him her hand; her face radiant with kind expression. Lady Wallinger seemed gratified also by his visit. She had much elegance in her manner; a calm soft address; and she spoke English with a sweet doric irregularity. They all sat down, talked of the last night's ball, of a thousand things. There was something animating in the frank, cheerful, spirit of Edith. She had a quick eye both for the beautiful and the ridiculous, and threw out her observations in terse and vivid phrases. An hour, and more than

an hour, passed away, and Coningsby still found some excuse not to depart. It seemed that on this morning they were about to make an expedition into the antique city of Paris to visit some old hotels which retained their character; especially they had heard much of the hotel of the Archbishop of Sens, with its fortified court-yard. Coningsby expressed great interest in the subject, and showed some knowledge. Sir Joseph invited him to join the party, which of all things in the world was what he most desired.

CHAPTER IV.

Not a day elapsed without Coningsby being in the company of Edith. Time was precious for him, for the spires and pinnacles of Cambridge already began to loom in the distance, and he resolved to make the most determined efforts not to lose a day of his liberty. And yet to call every morning in the Rue de Rivoli, was an exploit which surpassed even the audacity of love! More than once, making the attempt, his courage failed him, and he turned into the gardens of the Tuileries, and only watched the windows of the house. Circumstances however favoured him: he received a letter from Oswald

Millbank; he was bound to communicate in person this evidence of his friend's existence; and when he had to reply to the letter, he must necessarily inquire whether his friend's relatives had any message to transmit to him. These however were only slight advantages. What assisted Coningsby in his plans and wishes was the great pleasure which Sidonia, with whom he passed a great deal of his time, took in the society of the Wallingers and their niece. Sidonia presented Lady Wallinger with his opera-box during her stay at Paris; invited them very frequently to his agreeable dinner parties; and announced his determination to give a ball, which Lady Wallinger esteemed a delicate attention to Edith; while Lady Monmouth flattered herself that the festival sprang from the desire she had expressed of seeing the celebrated hotel of Sidonia to advantage.

Coningsby was very happy. His morning visits to the Rue de Rivoli seemed always welcome, and seldom an evening elapsed in which he did not find himself in the society of Edith. She seemed not to wish to conceal that his

presence gave her pleasure, and though she had many admirers and had an airy graciousness for all of them, Coningsby sometimes indulged the exquisite suspicion that there was a flattering distinction in her carriage to himself. Under the influence of these feelings, he began daily to be more conscious that separation would be an intolerable calamity; he began to meditate upon the feasibility of keeping a half term, and of postponing his departure to Cambridge to a period nearer the time when Edith would probably return to England.

In the meanwhile the Parisian world talked much of the grand fête which was about to be given by Sidonia. Coningsby heard much of it one day when dining at his grandfather's. Lady Monmouth seemed very intent on the occasion. Even Lord Monmouth half talked of going, though for his part he wished people would come to him, and never ask him to their houses. That was his idea of society. He liked the world, but he liked to find it under his own roof. He grudged them nothing, so that they would not insist upon the reciprocity

of cold-catching, and would eat his good dinners instead of insisting on his eating their bad ones.

"But Monsieur Sidonia's cook is a gem, they say," observed an attaché of an Embassy.

"I have no doubt of it: Sidonia is a man of sense, almost the only man of sense I know. I never caught him tripping. He never makes a false move. Sidonia is exactly the sort of man I like; you know you cannot deceive him, and that he does not want to deceive you. I wish he liked a rubber more. Then he would be perfect."

"They say he is going to be married," said the Attaché.

"Poh!" said Lord Monmouth.

"Married?" exclaimed Lady Monmouth. "To whom?"

"To your beautiful country woman; 'la belle Anglaise' that all the world talks of," said the Attaché.

"And who may she be, pray?" said the Marquess. "I have so many beautiful country women."

"Mademoiselle Millbank," said the Attaché.

"Millbank," said the Marquess with a lowering brow. "There are so many Millbanks. Do you know what Millbank this is, Harry?" he inquired of his grandson, who had listened to the conversation with a rather embarrassed, and even agitated spirit.

"What, sir—yes—Millbank?" said Coningsby.

"I say, do you know who this Millbank is?"

"Oh! Miss Millbank: yes, I believe, that is I know a daughter of the—the gentleman who purchased some property near you."

"Oh! that fellow! Has he got a daughter here!"

"The most beautiful girl in Paris," said the Attaché.

"Lady Monmouth, have you seen this beauty?—That Sidonia is going to marry," he added with a fiendish laugh.

"I have seen the young lady," said Lady Monmouth; "but I had not heard that Monsieur Sidonia was about to marry her."

"Is she so very beautiful?" inquired another gentleman.

"Yes," said Lady Monmouth calm, but very pale.

"Poh!" said the Marquess again.

"I assure you that it is a fact," said the Attaché; "not at least an on-dit. I have it from a quarter that could not be well mistaken."

Behold a little snatch of ordinary dinner gossip that left a very painful impression on the minds of three individuals who were present.

The name of Millbank revived in Lord Monmouth's mind a sense of defeat, discomfiture, and disgust; Hellingsley, lost elections, and Mr. Rigby; three subjects which Lord Monmouth had succeeded for a time in expelling from his sensations. His Lordship thought that in all probability this beauty of whom they spoke so highly was not really the daughter of his foe; that it was some confusion which had arisen from the similarity of names; nor did he believe that Sidonia was going to marry her, whoever she might be; but a variety of things had been said at dinner, and a number of images had been raised in his mind that

touched his spleen. He took his wine freely, and, the usual consequence of that proceeding with Lord Monmouth, became silent and sullen. As for Lady Monmouth she had learnt that Sidonia whatever might be the result was paying very marked attention to another woman, for whom undoubtedly he was giving that very ball which she had flattered herself was a homage to her wishes, and for which she had projected a new dress of eclipsing splendour.

Coningsby felt quite sure that the story of Sidonia's marriage with Edith was the most ridiculous idea that ever entered into the imagination of man; at least he thought he felt quite sure. But the idlest and wildest report that the woman you love is about to marry another is not comfortable. Besides he could not conceal from himself that between the Wallingers and Sidonia there existed a remarkable intimacy, fully extended to their niece. He had seen her certainly on more than one occasion in lengthened, and apparently earnest conversation with Sidonia, who, by the bye,

spoke with her often in Spanish and never concealed his admiration of her charms nor the interest he found in her society. And Edith —what, after all, had passed between Edith and himself, which should at all gainsay this report, which he had been particularly assured was not a mere report, but came from a quarter that could not be well mistaken? She had received him with kindness. And how should she receive one, who was the friend and preserver of her only brother, and apparently the intimate and cherished acquaintance of her future husband? Coningsby felt that sickness of the heart that accompanies one's first misfortune. The illusions of life seemed to dissipate and disappear. He was miserable; he had no confidence in himself, in his future. After all, what was he? A dependant on a man of very absolute will and passions. Could he forget the glance with which Lord Monmouth caught the name of Millbank and received the intimation of Hellingsley? It was a glance for a Spagnoletto, or a Caravaggio to catch and immortalize. Why if Edith were not going to marry Sidonia,

how was he ever to marry her, even if she cared for him? Oh! what a future of unbroken, continuous, interminable misery awaited him! Was there ever yet born a being with a destiny so dark and dismal! He was the most forlorn of men, utterly wretched! He had entirely mistaken his own character. He had no energy, no abilities, not a single eminent quality. All was over!

CHAPTER V.

It was fated that Lady Monmouth should not be present at that ball, the anticipation of which had occasioned her so much pleasure and some pangs.

On the morning after that slight conversation, which had so disturbed the souls, though unconsciously to each other, of herself and Coningsby, the Marquess was driving Lucretia up the avenue Marigny in his phaeton. About the centre of the avenue, the horses took fright, and started off at a wild pace. The Marquess was an experienced whip, calm and with exer-

tion still very powerful. He would have soon mastered the horses, had not one of the reins unhappily broke. The horses swerved; the Marquess kept his seat; Lucretia alarmed sprang up, the carriage was dashed against the trunk of a tree, and she was thrown out of it, at the very instant that one of the outriders had succeeded in heading the equipage, and checking the horses.

The Marchioness was senseless. Lord Monmouth had descended from the phaeton; several passengers had assembled; the door of a contiguous house was opened; there were offers of service, sympathy, inquiries, a babble of tongues, great confusion.

"Get surgeons; and send for her maid," said Lord Monmouth to one of his servants.

In the midst of this distressing tumult, Sidonia on horseback followed by a groom, came up the avenue from the Champs Elysées. The empty phaeton, reins broken, horses held by strangers, all the appearances of a misadventure, attracted

him. He recognized the livery. He instantly dismounted. Moving aside the crowd, he perceived Lady Monmouth senseless and prostrate, and her husband, without assistance, restraining the injudicious efforts of the bye-standers.

"Let us carry her in, Lord Monmouth," said Sidonia, exchanging a recognition as he took Lucretia in his arms, and bore her into the dwelling that was at hand. Those who were standing at the door assisted him. The woman of the house and Lord Monmouth only were present.

"I would hope there is no fracture," said Sidonia, placing her on a sofa, "nor does it appear to me that the percussion of the head, though considerable, could have been fatally violent. I have caught her pulse. Keep her in a horizontal position and she will soon come to herself."

The Marquess seated himself in a chair by the side of the sofa which Sidonia had advanced to the middle of the room. Lord Monmouth was silent and very serious. Sidonia opened the window, and touched the brow of Lucretia with

water. At this moment M. Villebecque and a surgeon entered the chamber.

"The brain cannot be affected with that pulse," said the surgeon; "there is no fracture."

"How pale she is!" said Lord Monmouth as if he were examining a picture.

"The colour seems to me to return," said Sidonia.

The surgeon applied some restoratives which he had brought with him. The face of the Marchioness became more animated; she stirred.

"She revives," said the surgeon.

The Marchioness breathed with some force; again; then half opened her eyes, and then instantly closed them.

"If I could but get her to take this draught!" said the surgeon.

"Stop—moisten her lips first," said Sidonia.

They placed the draught to her mouth; in a moment, she put forth her hand as if to repress them, then opened her eyes again, and sighed.

"She is herself," said the surgeon.

"Lucretia," said the Marquess.

"Sidonia," said the Marchioness.

Lord Monmouth looked round to invite his friend to come forward.

"Lady Monmouth!" said Sidonia in a gentle voice.

She started, rose a little on the sofa, stared around her. "Where am I?" she exclaimed.

"With me," said the Marquess, and he bent forward to her, and took her hand.

"Sidonia!" she again exclaimed in a voice of inquiry.

"Is here," said Lord Monmouth. "He carried you in after our accident."

"Accident! Why is he going to marry?"

The Marquess took a pinch of snuff.

There was an awkward pause in the chamber.

"I think now," said Sidonia to the surgeon, "that Lady Monmouth would take the draught."

She refused it.

"Try you, Sidonia," said the Marquess rather dryly.

"You feel yourself again?" said Sidonia, advancing.

"Would I did not!" said the Marchioness,

with an air of stupor. "What has happened? Why am I here? Are you married?"

"She wanders a little," said Sidonia.

The Marquess took another pinch of snuff.

"I could have born even repulsion," said Lady Monmouth in a voice of desolation, "but not for another!"

"M. Villebecque," said the Marquess.

"My Lord?"

Lord Monmouth looked at him with that irresistible scrutiny, which would daunt a galley slave; and then after a short pause, said, "The carriage should have arrived by this time. Let us get home."

CHAPTER VI.

AFTER the conversation at dinner which we have noticed, the restless and disquieted Coningsby wandered about Paris, vainly seeking in the distraction of a great city some relief from the excitement of his mind. His first resolution was immediately to depart for England; but when, on reflection, he was mindful that after all, the assertion which had so agitated him might really be without foundation, in spite of many circumstances that to his regardful fancy seemed to accredit it, his firm resolution began to waver.

These were the first pangs of jealousy that

Coningsby had ever experienced; and they revealed to him the immensity of the stake which he was hazarding on a most uncertain die.

The next morning he called in the Rue Rivoli and was informed that the family were not at home. He was returning under the arcades towards the Rue St. Florentin, when Sidonia passed him in an opposite direction on horseback and at a rapid rate. Coningsby, who was not observed by him, could not resist a strange temptation to watch for a moment his progress. Coningsby saw him enter the Court of the Hotel where the Wallinger family were staying. Would he come forth immediately? No. Coningsby stood still and pale. Minute followed minute. Coningsby flattered himself that Sidonia was only speaking to the porter. Then he would fain believe Sidonia was writing a note. Then crossing the street, he mounted by some steps the terrace of the Tuileries nearly opposite the Hotel of the Minister of Finance, and watched the house. A quarter of an hour elapsed, Sidonia did not come forth. They were at home to him; only to him. Sick at heart,

infinitely wretched, scarcely able to guide his steps, dreading even to meet an acquaintance, and almost feeling that his tongue would refuse the office of conversation, he contrived to reach his grandfather's hotel, and was about to bury himself in his chamber, when on the staircase he met Flora.

Coningsby had not seen her for the last fortnight. Seeing her now, his heart smote him for his neglect, excusable as it really was. Any one else at this time, he would have hurried by without recognition, but the gentle and suffering Flora was too meek to be rudely treated by so kind a heart as Coningsby's.

He looked at her; she was pale and agitated. Her step trembled, while she still hastened on.

"What is the matter?" inquired Coningsby.

"My Lord, — the Marchioness, — are in danger, thrown from their carriage." Briefly she detailed to Coningsby all that had occurred; that M. Villebecque had already repaired to them; that she herself only this moment had learned the intelligence, that seemed to agitate her to the centre. Coningsby instantly

turned with her; but they had scarcely emerged from the court-yard when the carriage approached that brought Lord and Lady Monmouth home. They followed it into the court. They were immediately at its door.

"All is right, Harry," said the Marquess, calm and grave.

Coningsby pressed his grandfather's hand. Then he assisted Lucretia to alight.

"I am quite well," she said, "now."

"But you must lean on me, dearest Lady Monmouth," Coningsby said in a tone of great tenderness, as he felt Lucretia almost sinking from him. And he supported her into the hall of the hotel.

Lord Monmouth had lingered behind. Flora crept up to him, and with unwonted boldness offered her arm to the Marquess. He looked at her with a glance of surprise, and then a softer expression, one indeed of an almost winning sweetness, which, though rare, was not a stranger to his countenance, melted his features, and taking the arm so humbly presented, he said :

"Ma Petite, you look more frightened than any of us. Poor child!"

He had reached the top of the flight of steps; he withdrew his arm from Flora, and thanked her with all his courtesy.

"You are not hurt then, sir?" she ventured to ask with a look which expressed the infinite solicitude, which her tongue did not venture to convey.

"By no means, my good little girl;" and he extended his hand to her, which she reverently bent over and embraced.

CHAPTER VII.

When Coningsby had returned to his grandfather's hotel that morning, it was with a determination of leaving Paris the next day for England, but the accident to Lady Monmouth, though, as it ultimately appeared, accompanied by no very serious consequences, quite dissipated this intention. It was impossible to quit them so crudely, at such a moment. So he remained another day, and that was the day preceding Sidonia's fête, which he particularly resolved not to attend. He felt it quite impossible that he could again endure the sight of either Sidonia or Edith. He looked upon them as persons who

had deeply injured him; though they really were individuals who had treated him with invariable kindness. But he felt their existence was a source of mortification and misery to him. With these feelings, sauntering away the last hours at Paris, disquieted, uneasy; no present, no future; no enjoyment, no hope; really, positively, undeniably, unhappy; unhappy too for the first time in his life; the first unhappiness—what a companion piece for the first love—Coningsby, of all places in the world, in the gardens of the Luxembourg, encountered Sir Joseph Wallinger and Edith.

To avoid them was impossible; they met face to face; and Sir Joseph stopped, and immediately reminded him that it was three days since they had seen him, as if to reproach him for so unprecedented a neglect. And it seemed that Edith, though she said not as much, felt the same. And Coningsby turned round and walked with them. He told them he was going to leave Paris on the morrow.

"And miss Monsieur de Sidonia's fête, of which we have all talked so much!" said Edith

with unaffected surprise, and an expression of disappointment which she in vain attempted to conceal.

"The festival will be not less gay for my absence," said Coningsby with that plaintive moroseness not unusual to despairing lovers.

"If we were all to argue from the same premises and act accordingly," said Edith, "the saloons would be empty. But if any person's absence would be remarked, I should really have thought it would be yours. I thought you were one of Monsieur de Sidonia's great friends!"

"He has no friend," said Coningsby. "No wise man has. What are friends? Traitors."

Edith looked very much astonished. And then she said:

"I am sure you have not quarrelled with Monsieur de Sidonia, for we have just parted with him."

"I have no doubt you have," thought Coningsby.

"And it is impossible to speak of another in higher terms than he spoke of you. Sir Joseph observed how unusual it was for Monsieur de Sidonia to express himself so warmly."

"Sidonia is a great man, and carries every thing before him," said Coningsby. "I am nothing; I cannot cope with him; I retire from the field."

"What field?" inquired Sir Joseph, who did not clearly catch the drift of these observations. "It appears to me that a field for action is exactly what Sidonia wants. There is no vent for his abilities and intelligence. He wastes his energy in travelling from capital to capital like a King's messenger. The morning after his fête he is going to Madrid."

This brought some reference to their mutual movements. Edith spoke of her return to Lancashire, of her hope that Mr. Coningsby would soon see Oswald; but Mr. Coningsby informed her that though he was going to leave Paris, he had no intention of returning to England; that he had not yet quite made up

his mind whither he should go; but thought that he should travel direct to St. Petersburg. He wished to travel overland to Astrachan. That was the place he was particularly anxious to visit.

After this incomprehensible announcement, they walked on for some minutes in silence, broken only by occasional monosyllables with which Coningsby responded at hazard to the sound remarks of Sir Joseph. As they approached the Palace, a party of English who were visiting the Chamber of Peers, and who were acquainted with the companions of Coningsby, encountered them. Amid the mutual recognitions, Coningsby was about to take his leave somewhat ceremoniously; but Edith held forth her hand, and said:

"Is this indeed farewell?"

His heart was agitated, his countenance changed; he retained her hand amid the chattering tourists, too full of their criticisms and their egotistical common places to notice what was passing. A sentimental ebullition seemed to be on the point of taking place. Their

eyes met. The look of Edith was mournful and inquiring.

"We will say farewell at the ball," said Coningsby, and she rewarded him with a radiant smile.

CHAPTER VIII.

SIDONIA lived in the Faubourg St. Germain in a large hotel, that, in old days, had belonged to the Crillons; but it had received at his hands such extensive alterations, that nothing of the original decoration, and little of its arrangement, remained.

A flight of marble steps, ascending from a vast court, led into a hall of great dimensions, which was at the same time an orangery, and a gallery of sculpture. It was illumined by a distinct, yet soft and subdued, light, which harmonised with the beautiful repose of the surrounding forms, and with the exotic perfume

that was wafted about. A gallery led from this hall to an inner hall of quite a different character; fantastic, glittering, variegated; full of strange shapes and dazzling objects.

The roof was carved and gilt in that honeycomb style prevalent in the Saracenic buildings; the walls were hung with leather stamped in rich and vivid patterns; the floor was a flood of mosaic; about were statues of negroes of human size with faces of wild expression, and holding in their outstretched hands silver torches that blazed with an almost painful brilliancy.

From this inner hall, a double staircase of white marble, led to the grand suite of apartments.

These saloons, lofty, spacious, and numerous, had been decorated principally in encaustic by the most celebrated artists of Munich. The three principal rooms were only separated from each other by columns, covered with rich hangings, on this night drawn aside. The decoration of each chamber was appropriate to its purpose. On the walls of the ball-room, nymphs and heroes moved in measure in Sici-

lian landscapes, or on the azure shores of Ægean waters. From the ceiling beautiful divinities threw garlands on the guests, who seemed surprised that the roses, unwilling to quit Olympus, would not descend on earth. The general effect of this fair chamber was heightened too by that regulation of the house which did not permit any benches in the ball-room. That dignified assemblage who are always found ranged in precise discipline against the wall, did not here mar the flowing grace of the festivity. The chapcrons had no cause to complain. A large saloon abounded in ottomans and easy chairs at their service, where their delicate charges might rest when weary, or find distraction when not engaged.

All the world were at this fête of Sidonia. It exceeded in splendour and luxury every entertainment that had yet been given. The highest rank, even Princes of the blood, beauty, fashion, fame—all assembled in a magnificent and illuminated palace, resounding with exquisite melody.

Coningsby though somewhat depressed, was not insensible to the magic of the scene. Since the passage in the gardens of the Luxembourg —that tone—that glance—he had certainly felt much relieved, happier. And yet if all were, with regard to Sidonia, as unfounded as he could possibly desire, where was he then? Had he forgotten his grandfather—that fell look, that voice of intense detestation? What was Millbank to him? Where, what was the mystery, for of some he could not doubt. The Spanish parentage of Edith had only more perplexed Coningsby. It offered no solution. There could be no connection between a Catalan family and his mother, the daughter of a clergyman in a midland county. That there was any relationship between the Millbank family and his mother was contradicted by the conviction in which he had been brought up that his mother had no relations; that she returned to England utterly friendless; without a relative, a connection, an acquaintance to whom she could appeal. Her complete forlornness was

stamped upon his brain. Tender as were his years, when he was separated from her, he could yet recal the very phrases in which she deplored her isolation; and there were numerous passages in her letters which alluded to it. Coningsby had taken occasion to sound the Wallingers on this subject; but he felt assured from the manner in which his advances were met, that they knew nothing of his mother, and attributed the hostility of Mr. Millbank to his grandfather solely to political emulation and local rivalries. Still there was the portrait and the miniature. That was a fact; a clue which ultimately, he was persuaded, must lead to some solution.

Coningsby had met with great social success at Paris. He was at once a favourite. The Parisian dames decided in his favour. He was a specimen of the highest style of English beauty which is very popular in France. His air was acknowledged as distinguished. The men also liked him; he had not quite arrived at that age, when you make enemies. The

moment therefore that he found himself in the saloons of Sidonia, he was accosted by many whose notice was flattering; but his eye wandered, while he tried to be courteous and attempted to be sprightly. Where was she? He had nearly reached the ball-room when he met her. She was on the arm of Lord Beaumanoir, who had made her acquaintance at Rome, and originally claimed it as the member of a family who, as the reader may perhaps not forget, had experienced some kindnesses from the Millbanks.

There were mutual and hearty recognitions between the young men; great explanations where they had been, what they were doing, where they were going. Lord Beaumanoir told Coningsby he had introduced steeple-chaces at Rome, and had parted with Sunbeam to the nephew of a Cardinal. Coningsby securing Edith's hand for the next dance, they all moved on together to her aunt.

Lady Wallinger was indulging in some Roman reminiscences with the Marquess.

"And you are not going to Astrachan to-morrow?" said Edith.

"Not to-morrow," said Coningsby.

"You know that you said once that life was too stirring in these days to permit travel to a man?"

"I wish nothing was stirring," said Coningsby. "I wish nothing to change. All that I wish is, that this fête should never end"

"Is it possible, that you can be capricious! You perplex me very much."

"Am I capricious, because I dislike change?"

"But Astrachan?"

"It was the air of the Luxembourg that reminded me of the desart," said Coningsby.

Soon after this Coningsby led Edith to the dance. It was at a ball that he had first met her at Paris, and this led to other reminiscences; all most interesting. Coningsby was perfectly happy. All mysteries, all difficulties, were driven from his recollection; he lived only in the exciting and enjoyable present. Twenty-one and in love!

Some time after this, Coningsby who was inevitably separated from Edith, met his host.

"Where have you been, child," said Sidonia, "that I have not seen you for some days? I am going to Madrid to-morrow."

"And I must think, I suppose, of Cambridge."

"Well, you have seen something; you will find it more profitable when you have digested it; and you will have opportunity. That's the true spring of wisdom: meditate over the past. Adventure and Contemplation share our being like day and night."

The resolute departure for England on the morrow, had already changed into a supposed necessity of thinking of returning to Cambridge. In fact, Coningsby felt that to quit Paris and Edith was an impossibility. He silenced the remonstrance of his conscience by the expedient of keeping a half-term; and had no difficulty in persuading himself that a short delay in taking his degree could not really be of the slightest consequence.

It was the hour of supper. The guests at a

French ball are not seen to advantage at this period. The custom of separating the sexes for this refreshment, and arranging that the ladies should partake of it by themselves, though originally founded in a feeling of consideration and gallantry, and with the determination to secure under all circumstances the convenience and comfort of the fair sex, is really, in its appearance and its consequences, anything but European, and produces a scene which rather reminds one of the harem of a sultaun, than a hall of chivalry. To judge from the countenances of the favoured fair, they are not themselves particularly pleased; and when their repast is over, they necessarily return to empty halls, and are deprived of the dance at the very moment when they may feel most inclined to participate in its graceful excitement.

These somewhat ungracious circumstances however were not attendant on the festival of this night. There was opened in the Hotel of Sidonia for the first time a banquetting room which could contain with convenience all the guests. It was a vast chamber of white marble,

the golden pannels of the walls containing festive sculptures by Schwanthaler, relieved by encaustic tinting. In its centre was a fountain, a group of Bacchantes encircling Dionysos; and from this fountain, as from a star, diverged the various tables from which sprang orange trees in fruit and flower.

The banquet had but one fault; Coningsby was separated from Edith. The Duchess of Grand Cairo, the beautiful wife of the heir of one of the Imperial illustrations, had determined to appropriate Coningsby as her cavalier for the moment. Distracted, he made his escape; but his wandering eye could not find the object of its search; and he fell prisoner to the charming Princess De Petitpoix, a Carlist chieftain, whose witty words avenged the cause of fallen dynasties and a cashiered nobility.

Behold a scene brilliant in fancy, magnificent in splendour! All the circumstances of his life at this moment were such as acted forcibly on the imagination of Coningsby. Separated from Edith, he had still the delight of seeing her, the paragon of that bright company, the consum-

mate being whom he adored! And who had spoken to him in a voice sweeter than a serenade, and had bestowed on him a glance softer than moonlight. The lord of the palace, more distinguished even for his capacity than his boundless treasure, was his chosen friend; gained under circumstances of romantic interest, when the reciprocal influence of their personal qualities was affected by no accessory knowledge of their worldly positions. He himself was in the very bloom of youth and health; the child of a noble house, rich for his present wants, and with a future of considerable fortunes. Entrancing love and dazzling friendship, a high ambition and the pride of knowledge, the consciousness of a great prosperity, the vague, daring energies of the high pulse of twenty-one, all combined to stimulate his sense of existence, which, as he looked around him at the beautiful objects and listened to the delicious sounds, seemed to him a dispensation of almost supernatural ecstacy.

About an hour after this, the ball-room still full, but the other saloons gradually emptying,

Coningsby entered a chamber which seemed deserted. Yet he heard sounds as it were of earnest conversation. It was a voice that invited his progress; he advanced another step, then suddenly stopped. There were two individuals in the room, by whom he was unnoticed. They were Sidonia and Miss Millbank. They were sitting on a sofa, Sidonia holding her hand and endeavouring, as it seemed, to soothe her. Her tones were tremulous; but the expression of her face was fond and confiding. It was all the work of a moment. Coningsby instantly withdrew, yet could not escape hearing an earnest request from Edith to her companion that he would write to her.

In a few seconds Coningsby had quitted the hotel of Sidonia, and the next day found him on his road to England.

BOOK VII.

CHAPTER I.

It was one of those gorgeous and enduring sunsets that seem to linger as if they wished to celebrate the mid period of the year. Perhaps the beautiful hour of impending twilight never exercises a more effective influence on the soul than when it descends on the aspect of some distant and splendid city. What a contrast between the serenity and repose of our own bosoms, and the fierce passions and destructive cares girt in the walls of that multitude, whose

domes and towers rise in purple lustre against the resplendent horizon!

And yet the disturbing emotions of existence and the bitter inheritance of humanity, should exercise but a modified sway and entail but a light burden, within the circle of the city in which the next scene of our history leads us. For it is the sacred city of Study, of Learning, and of Faith; and the declining beam is resting on the dome of the Radcliffe, lingering on the towers of Christchurch and Magdalen, sanctifying the spires and pinnacles of holy St. Mary's.

A young Oxonian, who had been watching for some time the city in the sunset from a rising ground in its vicinity, lost, as it would seem, in meditation, suddenly rose and looking at his watch as if remindful of some engagement, hastened his return at a rapid pace. He reached the High Street, as the Blenheim light post coach dashed up to the Star Hotel, with that brilliant precision which even the New Generation can remember, and yet which already ranks among the traditions of English manners. A peculiar and most animating spectacle used

to be the arrival of a first-rate light coach in a country town! The small machine crowded with so many passengers, the foaming and curvetting leaders, the wheelers more steady, and glossy as if they had not done their ten miles in the hour, the triumphant bugle of the guard, and the haughty routine with which the driver, as he reached his goal, threw his whip to the obedient ostlers in attendance; and not least the staring crowd, a little awe-struck, and looking for the moment at the lowest official of the stable with considerable respect; altogether made a picture which one recollects with cheerfulness, and misses now in many a dreary market town.

Our Oxonian was a young man about the middle height, and naturally of a very thoughtful expression and rather reserved mien. The general character of his countenance was indeed a little stern, but it broke into an almost bewitching smile, and a blush suffused his face, as he sprang forward and welcomed an individual about the same age, who had jumped off the Blenheim.

"Well, Coningsby!" he exclaimed, extending both his hands.

"By Jove, my dear Millbank, we have met at last," said his friend.

And here we must for a moment revert to what had occurred to Coningsby since he so suddenly quitted Paris at the beginning of the year. The wound he had received was deep to one unused to wounds. Yet after all, none had outraged his feeling, no one had betrayed his hopes. He had loved one who had loved another. Misery, but scarcely humiliation. And yet 'tis a bitter pang under any circumstances to find another preferred to yourself. It is about the same blow as one would probably feel if falling from a balloon. Your Icarian flight melts into a very grovelling existence, scarcely superior to that of a sponge or a coral, or redeemed only from utter insensibility by your very frank detestation of your rival. It is quite impossible to conceal that Coningsby had imbibed for Sidonia a certain degree of aversion, which in these days of exaggerated phrase might even be described as hatred. And Edith was so

beautiful! And there had seemed between them a sympathy so native and spontaneous, creating at once the charm of intimacy without any of the disenchanting attributes, that are occasionally its consequence. He would recall the tones of her voice, the expression of her soft dark eye, the airy spirit and frank graciousness, sometimes even the flattering blush, with which she had ever welcomed one of whom she had heard so long and so kindly. It seemed, to use a sweet and homely phrase, that they were made for each other; the circumstances of their mutual destinies might have combined into one enchanting fate.

And yet had she accorded him that peerless boon, her heart—with what aspect was he to communicate this consummation of all his hopes to his grandfather, ask Lord Monmouth for his blessing, and the gracious favour of an establishment for the daughter of his foe; of a man whose name was never mentioned except to cloud his visage. Ah! what was that mystery that connected the haughty house of Coningsby with the humble blood of the Lanca-

shire manufacturer? Why was the portrait of his mother beneath the roof of Millbank? Coningsby had delicately touched upon the subject both with Edith and the Wallingers, but the result of his inquiries only involved the question in deeper gloom. Edith had none but maternal relatives; more than once she had mentioned this, and the Wallingers on other occasions had confirmed the remark. Coningsby had sometimes drawn the conversation to pictures, and he would remind her with playfulness of their first unconscious meeting in the gallery of the Rue Tronchet; then he remembered that Mr. Millbank was fond of pictures; then he recollected some specimens of Mr. Millbank's collection, and after touching on several which could not excite suspicion, he came to "a portrait, a portrait of a lady; was it a portrait, or an ideal countenance?"

Edith thought she had heard it was a portrait, but she was by no means certain; and most assuredly was quite unacquainted with the name of the original, if there were an original.

Coningsby addressed himself to the point

with Sir Joseph. He inquired of the uncle explicitly, whether he knew anything on the subject. Sir Joseph was of opinion that it was something that Millbank had somewhere "picked up." Millbank used often to "pick up" pictures.

Disappointed in his love, Coningsby sought refuge in the excitement of study, and in the brooding imagination of an aspiring spirit. The softness of his heart seemed to have quitted him for ever. He recurred to his habitual reveries of political greatness and public distinction. And as it ever seemed to him, that no preparation could be complete for the career which he planned for himself, he devoted himself with increased ardour to that digestion of knowledge which converts it into wisdom. His life at Cambridge was now a life of seclusion. With the exception of a very few Eton friends he avoided all society. And indeed his acquisitions during this term were such as few have equalled, and could only have been mastered by a mental discipline of a severe and exalted character. At the end of the term Coningsby took his

degrce, and in a few days was about to quit that University where on the whole he had passed three serene and happy years, in the society of fond and faithful friends, and in ennobling pursuits. He had many plans for his impending movements, yet none of them very mature ones. Lord Vcré wished Coningsby to visit his family in the north, and afterwards to go to Scotland together; Coningsby was more inclined to travel for a year. Amid this hesitation, a circumstance occurred which decided him to adopt neither of these courses.

It was Commencement, and coming out of the quadrangle of St. John's, Coningsby came suddenly upon Sir Joseph and Lady Wallinger, who were visiting the marvels and rarities of the University. They were alone. Coningsby was a little embarrassed, for he could not forget the abrupt manner in which he had parted from them; but they greeted him with so much cordiality that he instantly recovered himself, and turning became their companion. He hardly ventured to ask after Edith; at length in

a depressed tone and a hesitating manner he inquired whether they had lately seen Miss Millbank. He was himself surprised at the extreme lightheartedness which came over him the moment he heard she was in England, at Millbank, with her family. He always very much liked Lady Wallinger; but this morning he hung over her like a lover, lavished on her unceasing and the most delicate attentions, seemed to exist only in the idea of making the Wallingers enjoy and understand Cambridge; no one else was to be their guide at any place, or under any circumstances. He told them exactly what they were to see; how they were to see it; when they were to see it. He told them of things which nobody did see; but which they should. He insisted that Sir Joseph should dine with him in Hall; Sir Joseph could not think of leaving Lady Wallinger; Lady Wallinger could not think of Sir Joseph missing an opportunity that might never offer again. Besides they might both join her after dinner. Except to give her husband a dinner, Co-

ningsby evidently intended never to leave her side.

And the next morning, the occasion favourable, being alone with the lady, Sir Joseph bustling about a carriage, Coningsby said suddenly with a countenance a little disturbed, and in a low voice, "I was pleased, I mean surprised to hear that there was still a Miss Millbank; I thought by this time she might have borne another name?"

Lady Wallinger looked at him with an expression of some perplexity, and then said, "Yes, Edith was very much admired; but she need not be precipitate in marrying. Marriage is for a woman *the* event. Edith is too precious to be carelessly bestowed."

"But I understood," said Coningsby, "when I left Paris," and here he became very confused, "that Miss Millbank was engaged, on the point of marriage."

"With whom?"

"Our friend, Sidonia."

"I am sure that Edith would never marry Monsieur de Sidonia, nor Monsieur de Sidonia,

Edith. 'Tis a preposterous idea," said Lady Wallinger.

"But he very much admired her?" said Coningsby with a searching eye.

"Possibly," said Lady Wallinger, "but he never even intimated his admiration."

"But he was very attentive to Miss Millbank?"

"Not more than our intimate friendship authorised, and might expect."

"You have known Sidonia a long time?"

"It was Monsieur de Sidonia's father who introduced us to the care of Mr. Wallinger," said Lady Wallinger, "and therefore I have ever entertained for his son a most sincere regard. Besides I look upon him as a compatriot. Recently he has been even more than usually kind to us,—especially to Edith. While we were at Paris he recovered for her a great number of jewels which had been left to her by her uncle in Spain, and, what she prized infinitely more, the whole of her mother's correspondence which she maintained with this relative since her marriage. Nothing but the

influence of Sidonia could have effected this. Therefore of course Edith is attached to him, almost as much as I am. In short, he is our dearest friend; our counsellor in all our cares. But as for marrying him, the idea is ridiculous to those who know Monsieur Sidonia. No earthly consideration would ever induce him to impair that purity of race on which he prides himself. Besides there are other obvious objections, which would render an alliance between him and my niece utterly impossible; Edith is quite as devoted to her religion as Monsieur Sidonia can be to his race."

A ray of light flashed on the brain of Coningsby, as Lady Wallinger said these words. The agitated interview, which never could be explained away, already appeared in quite a different point of view. He became pensive, remained silent, was relieved when Sir Joseph, whose return he had hitherto deprecated, reappeared. Coningsby learnt in the course of the day, that the Wallingers were about to make, and immediately, a visit to Hellingsley; their first visit; indeed this was the first year

that Mr. Millbank had taken up his abode there. He did not much like the change of life Sir Joseph told Coningsby, but Edith was delighted with Hellingsley, which Sir Joseph understood was a very distinguished place, with very fine gardens of which his niece was particularly fond.

When Coningsby returned to his rooms, those rooms which he was soon about to quit for ever, in arranging some papers preparatory to his removal, his eye lighted on a too long unanswered letter of Oswald Millbank. Coningsby had often projected a visit to Oxford, which he much desired to make, but hitherto it had been impossible for him to effect it except in the absence of Millbank; and he had frequently postponed it, that he might combine his first visit to that famous seat of learning with one to his old schoolfellow and friend. Now that was practical. And immediately Coningsby wrote to apprize Millbank that he had taken his degree, was free, and prepared to pay to him immediately the long projected visit. Three years and more had elapsed since they

had quitted Eton. How much had happened in the interval! What new ideas, new feelings, vast and novel knowledge! Though they had not met, they were nevertheless familiar with the progress and movement of each other's minds. Their suggestive correspondence was too valuable to both of them to have been otherwise than cherished. And now they were to meet, on the eve of entering that world for which they had made so sedulous a preparation.

CHAPTER II.

THERE are few things in life more interesting than an unrestrained interchange of ideas with a congenial spirit; and there are few things more rare. How very seldom do you encounter in the world a man of great abilities, acquirements, experience, who will unmask his mind; unbutton his brains; and pour forth in careless and picturesque phrase, all the results of his studies and observation; his knowledge of men, books and nature. On the contrary, if a man has by any chance what he conceives an original idea, he hoards it as if it were old gold; and rather avoids the subject with which he is most

conversant, from fear that you may appropriate his best thoughts. One of the principal causes of our renowned dullness in conversation is our extreme intellectual jealousy. It must be admitted that in this respect authors, but especially poets, bear the palm. They never think they are sufficiently appreciated, and live in tremour lest a brother should distinguish himself. Artists have the repute of being nearly as bad. And as for a small rising politician, a clever speech by a supposed rival or suspected candidate for office, destroys his appetite and disturbs his slumbers.

One of the chief delights and benefits of travel is that one is perpetually meeting men of great abilities, of original mind, and rare acquirements, who will converse without reserve. In these discourses, the intellect makes daring leaps and marvellous advances. The tone that colours our after life is often caught in these chance colloquies, and the bent given that shapes a career.

And yet perhaps there is no occasion when the heart is more open, the brain more quick,

the memory more rich and happy, or the tongue more prompt and eloquent, than when two school-day friends, knit by every sympathy of intelligence and affection, meet at the close of their college careers, after a long separation, hesitating as it were on the verge of active life, and compare together their conclusions of the interval; impart to each other all their thoughts and secret plans and projects; high fancies and noble aspirations; glorious visions of personal fame and national regeneration.

Ah! why should such enthusiasm ever die! Life is too short to be little. Man is never so manly as when he feels deeply, acts boldly, and expresses himself with frankness and with fervour.

Most assuredly there never was a Congress of Friendship wherein more was said and felt than in this meeting so long projected, and yet perhaps on the whole so happily procrastinated between Coningsby and Millbank. In a moment, they seemed as if they had never parted. Their faithful correspondence indeed had maintained the chain of sentiment unbroken. But

details are only for conversation. Each poured forth his mind without stint. Not an author that had influenced their taste or judgment, but was canvassed and criticised; not a theory they had framed or a principle they had adopted that was not confessed. Often with boyish glee still lingering with their earnest purpose, they shouted as they discovered that they had formed the same opinion or adopted the same conclusion. They talked all day and late into the night. They condensed into a week the poignant conclusions of three years of almost unbroken study. And one night as they sat together in Millbank's rooms at Oriel, their conversation having for some time taken a political colour, Millbank said:

"Now tell me, Coningsby, exactly what you conceive to be the state of parties in this country; for it seems to me that if we penetrate the surface, the classification must be more simple than their many names would intimate."

"The principle of the Exclusive Constitution of England having been conceded by the acts of 1827-8-32," said Coningsby, "a party has

arisen in the State, who demand that the principle of political liberalism shall consequently be carried to its extent; which it appears to them is impossible without getting rid of the fragments of the old Constitution that remain. This is the Destructive party; a party with distinct and intelligible principles. They seek a specific for the evils of our social system in the general suffrage of the population.

"They are resisted by another party, who having given up Exclusion, would only embrace as much Liberalism as is necessary for the moment; who without any embarrassing promulgation of principles wish to keep things as they find them as long as they can; and then will manage them as they find them as well as they can; but as a party must have the semblance of principles, they take the names of the things that they have destroyed. Thus they are devoted to the prerogatives of the Crown, although in truth the Crown has been stripped of every one of its prerogatives; they affect a great veneration for the Constitution in Church and State, though every one knows that the

Constitution in Church and State no longer exists; they are ready to stand or fall with the "independence of the Upper House of Parliament," though, in practice, they are perfectly aware, that, with their sanction, the "Upper House" has abdicated its initiatory functions, and now serves only as a Court of Review of the legislation of the House of Commons. Whenever public opinion which this party never attempts to form, to educate, or to lead, falls into some violent perplexity, passion, or caprice, this party yields without a struggle to the impulse, and when the storm has past, attempts to obstruct and obviate the logical, and ultimately the inevitable, results of the very measures they have themselves originated, or to which they have consented. This is the Conservative party.

"I care not whether men are called Whigs or Tories, Radicals or Chartists, or by what nickname a bustling and thoughtless race may designate themselves; but these two divisions comprehend at present the English nation.

"With regard to the first school, I for one have no faith in the remedial qualities of a

government carried on by a neglected democracy, who, for three centuries, have received no education. What prospect does it offer us of those high principles of conduct with which we have fed our imaginations and strengthened our will? I perceive none of the elements of government that should secure the happiness of a people and the greatness of a realm.

But in my opinion if Democracy be combated only by Conservativism, Democracy must triumph, and at no distant date. This then is our position. The man who enters public life at this epoch has to choose between Political Infidelity and a Destructive Creed."

"This then," said Millbank, "is the dilemma to which we are brought by nearly two centuries of Parliamentary Monarchy and Parliamentary Church?"

"'Tis true," said Coningsby. "We cannot conceal it from ourselves, that the first has made Government detested, and the second, Religion disbelieved."

"Many men in this country," said Millbank, "and especially in the class to which I belong,

are reconciled to the contemplation of democracy, because they have accustomed themselves to believe that it is the only power by which we can sweep away those sectional privileges and interests that impede the intelligence and industry of the community."

"And yet," said Coningsby, "the only way to terminate what in the language of the present day is called Class Legislation is not to intrust power to classes. You would find a locofoco majority as much addicted to Class Legislation as a factitious aristocracy. The only power, that has no class sympathy is the Sovereign."

"But suppose the case of an arbitrary Sovereign, what would be your check against him?"

"The same as against an arbitrary Parliament."

"But a Parliament is responsible."

"To whom?"

"To their constituent body."

"Suppose it was to vote itself perpetual?"

"But public opinion would prevent that."

"And is public opinion of less influence on an individual than on a body?"

"But public opinion may be indifferent: a nation may be misled, may be corrupt."

"If the nation that elects the Parliament be corrupt, the elected body will resemble it. The nation that is corrupt, deserves to fall. But this only shows that there is something to be considered beyond forms of government—national character. And herein mainly should we repose our hopes. If a nation be led to aim at the good and the great, depend upon it, whatever be its form, the government will respond to its convictions and its sentiments."

"Do you then declare against Parliamentary government?"

"Far from it: I look upon political change as the greatest of evils, for it comprehends all. But if we have no faith in the permanence of the existing settlement, if the very individuals who established it year after year are proposing their modifications or their reconstructions, so also, while we uphold what exists, ought we to prepare ourselves for the change we deem impending?

"Now I would not that either ourselves, or

our fellow citizens, should be taken unawares as in 1832, when the very men who opposed the Reform Bill offered contrary objections to it which destroyed each other, so ignorant were they of its real character, its historical causes, its political consequences. We should now so act, that when the occasion arrives, we should clearly comprehend what we want, and have formed an opinion as to the best means by which that want can be supplied.

"For this purpose, I would accustom the public mind to the contemplation of an existing though torpid power in the constitution; capable of removing our social grievances were we to transfer to it those prerogatives which the Parliament has gradually usurped, and used in a manner which has produced the present material and moral disorganisation. The House of Commons is the house of a few; the Sovereign is the Sovereign of all. The proper leader of the people is the individual who sits upon the throne."

"Then you abjure the Representative principle?"

"Why so? Representation is not necessary, or even in a principal sense, Parliamentary. Parliament is not sitting at this moment, and yet the nation is represented in its highest as well as in its most minute interests. Not a grievance escapes notice and redress. I see in the newspaper this morning that a pedagogue has brutally chastised his pupil. It is a fact known over all England. We must not forget that a principle of government is reserved for our days, that we shall not find in our Aristotles, or even in the forests of Tacitus, nor in our Saxon Wittenagemotes, nor in our Plantagenet Parliaments. Opinion now is supreme, and opinion speaks in print. The representation of the Press is far more complete than the representation of Parliament. Parliamentary representation was the happy device of a ruder age, to which it was admirably adapted; an age of semi-civilisation, when there was a leading class in the community; but it exhibits many symptoms of desuetude. It is controlled by a system of representation more vigorous and comprehensive; which absorbs its duties and fulfils them

more efficiently; and in which discussion is pursued on fairer terms, and often with more depth and information."

"And to what power would you intrust the function of Taxation?"

"To some power that would employ it more discreetly than in creating our present amount of debt, and in establishing our present system of imposts.

"In a word, true wisdom lies in the policy that would effect its ends by the influence of opinion, and yet by the means of existing forms. Nevertheless if we are forced to revolutions, let us propose to our consideration the idea of a free monarchy, established on fundamental laws, itself the apex of a vast pile of municipal and local government, ruling an educated people, represented by a free and intellectual press. Before such a royal authority, supported by such a national opinion, the sectional anomalies of our country would disappear. Under such a system, where qualification would not be parliamentary, but personal, even statesmen would be educated; we should have no more diplomatists who could

not speak French; no more bishops ignorant of theology; no more generals-in-chief who never saw a field.

"Now there is a polity adapted to our laws, our institutions, our feelings, our manners, our traditions; a polity capable of great ends, and appealing to high sentiments; a polity which in my opinion would render government an object of national affection; which would terminate sectional anomalies, assuage religious heats, and extinguish Chartism."

"You said to me yesterday," said Millbank, after a pause, "quoting the words of another which you adopted, that Man was made to adore and to obey. Now you have shown to me the means by which you deem it possible that government might become no longer odious to the subject; you have shown how man may be induced to obey. But there are duties and interests for man beyond political obedience, and social comfort, and national greatness; higher interests and greater duties. How would you deal with their spiritual necessities? You think you can combat political infidelity in a nation

by the principle of enlightened loyalty, how would you encounter religious infidelity in a state? By what means is the principle of profound reverence to be revived? How, in short, is man to be led to adore?"

"Ah! that is a subject which I have not forgotten," replied Coningsby. "I know from your letters, how deeply it has engaged your thoughts. I confess to you that it has often filled mine with perplexity and depression. When we were at Eton, and both of us impregnated with the contrary prejudices in which we had been brought up, there was still between us one common ground of sympathy and trust; we reposed with confidence and affection in the bosom of our Church. Time and Thought, with both of us, have only matured the spontaneous veneration of our boyhood. But Time and Thought have also shown me, that the Church of our heart is not in a position, as regards the community, consonant with its original and essential character, or with the welfare of the nation."

"The character of a Church is universality,"

replied Millbank. "Once the Church in this country was universal, in principle and practice; when wedded to the State, it continued at least universal in principle, if not in practice. What is it now? All ties between the State and the Church are abolished except those, which tend to its danger and degradation.

"What can be more anomalous than the present connection between State and Church? Every condition on which it was originally consented to has been cancelled. That original alliance was in my view an equal calamity for the Nation and the Church; but at least it was an intelligible compact. Parliament, then consisting only of members of the established Church was on ecclesiastical matters, a lay synod, and might in some points of view be esteemed a necessary portion of Church government. But you have effaced this exclusive character of parliament; you have determined that a communion with the established Church shall no longer be part of the qualification for sitting in the House of Commons. There is no reason, as far as the constitution avails, why every mem-

ber of the House of Commons should not be a dissenter. But the whole power of the country is concentred in the House of Commons. The House of Lords, even the Monarch himself, has openly announced and confessed, within these ten years that the will of the House of Commons is supreme. A single vote of the House of Commons in 1832 made the Duke of Wellington declare in the House of Lords that he was obliged to abandon his sovereign in 'the most difficult and distressing circumstances.' The House of Commons is absolute. It is the state. 'L'Etat, c'est moi.' The House of Commons virtually appoints the bishops. A sectarian assembly appoints the bishops of the established Church. They may appoint twenty Hoadleys. James II. was expelled the throne because he appointed a Roman Catholic to an Anglican see. A parliament might do this to-morrow with impunity. And this is the Constitution in Church and State which Conservative dinners toast! The only consequences of the present union of Church and State are, that, on the side of the State there is perpe-

tual interference in ecclesiastical government, and on the side of the Church a sedulous avoidance of all those principles on which alone Church government can be established, and by the influence of which alone can the Church of England again become universal."

"But it is urged that the State protects its revenues?"

"No ecclesiastical revenues should be safe, that require protection. Modern history is a history of Church spoliation. And by whom? Not by the people; not by the democracy. No, it is the Emperor, the King, the feudal Baron, the court Minion. The estate of the Church is the estate of the People, as long as the Church is governed on its real principles. The Church is the medium by which the despised and degraded classes assert the native equality of man, and vindicate the rights and power of Intellect. It made in the darkest hour of Norman rule, the son of a Saxon pedlar Primate of England; and placed Nicholas Breakspear, a Hertfordshire peasant, on the throne of the

Cæsars. It would do as great things now, if it were divorced from the degrading and tyrannical connection that enchains it. You would have other sons of peasants Bishops of England instead of men appointed to that sacred office solely because they were the needy scions of a factitious aristocracy; men of gross ignorance, profligate habits, and grinding extortion; who have disgraced the episcopal throne, and profaned the altar."

"But surely you cannot justly extend such a description to the present bench."

"Surely not: I speak of the past; of the past that has produced so much present evil. We live in decent times; frigid, latitudinarian, alarmed, decorous. A priest is scarcely deemed in our days a fit successor of the authors of the gospels, if he be not the editor of a Greek play; and he who follows St. Paul must now at least have been private tutor of some young nobleman, who has taken a good degree! And then you are all astonished that the Church is not universal! Why! nothing but the indestructibleness of its principles, however feebly pursued,

could have maintained even the disorganised body that still survives.

"And yet, my dear Coningsby, with all its past errors and all its present deficiencies, it is by the Church, I would have said until I listened to you to-night, by the Church alone, that I see any chance of regenerating the national character. The parochial system, though shaken by the fatal Poor Law, is still the most ancient, the most comprehensive, and the most popular institution of the country; the younger priests are, in general, men whose souls are awake to the high mission which they have to fulfil, and which their predecessors so neglected; there is I think a rising feeling in the community, that parliamentary interference in matters ecclesiastical has not tended either to the spiritual or the material elevation of the humbler orders. Divorce the Church from the State, and the spiritual power that struggled against the brute force of the dark ages, against tyrannical monarchs and barbarous barons, will struggle again in opposition to influences of a different form, but of a similar tendency; equally selfish, equally in-

sensible, equally barbarising. The priests of God are the tribunes of the people. Oh! ignorant! that with such a mission, they should ever have cringed in the anti-chambers of ministers, or bowed before parliamentary committees!"

"The Utilitarian system is dead," said Coningsby. "It has past through the heaven of philosophy like a hail storm; cold, noisy, sharp and peppering; and it has melted away. And yet can we wonder that it found some success, when we consider the political ignorance and social torpor which it assailed? Anointed Kings turned into chief magistrates, and therefore much overpaid; Estates of the Realm changed into parliaments of virtual representation, and therefore requiring real reform; Holy Church transformed into national establishment, and therefore grumbled at by all the nation for whom it was not supported. What an inevitable harvest of Sedition, Radicalism, Infidelity! I really think there is no society, however great its resources, that could long resist the united influences of Chief Magistrate, Virtual Representation, and Church Establishment!"

"I have immense faith in the New Generation," said Millbank eagerly.

"It is a holy thing to see a State saved by its youth," said Coningsby, and then he added in a tone of humility, if not of depression: "But what a task! What a variety of qualities, what a combination of circumstances are requisite! What bright abilities and what noble patience! What confidence from the People, what favour from the Most High!"

"But he will favour us," said Millbank. "And I say to you as Nathan said unto David, 'Thou art the man!' You were our leader at Eton; the friends of your heart and boyhood still cling and cluster around you, they are all men whose position forces them into public life. It is a nucleus of honour, faith and power. You have only to dare. And will you not dare? It is our privilege to live in an age when the career of the highest ambition is identified with the performance of the greatest good. Of the present epoch it may be truly said, 'Who dares to be good, dares to be great.'"

"Heaven is above all," said Coningsby. "The curtain of our fate is still undrawn. We are happy in our friends, dear Millbank, and whatever lights, we will stand together. For myself, I prefer fame to life; and yet, the consciousness of heroic deeds to the most widespread celebrity."

CHAPTER III.

THE beautiful light of summer had never shone on a scene and surrounding landscape which recalled happier images of English nature, and sweeter recollections of English manners, than that to which we would now introduce our readers. One of those true old English Halls now unhappily so rare, built in the time of the Tudors, and in its elaborate timber framing and decorative woodwork, indicating perhaps the scarcity of brick and stone at the period of its structure as much as the grotesque genius of its fabricator, rose on a terrace surrounded by ancient and very formal

gardens. The hall itself during many generations had been vigilantly and tastefully preserved by its proprietors. There was not a point which was not as fresh as if it had been renovated but yesterday. It stood a huge and strange blending of Grecian, Gothic, and Italian architecture, with a wild dash of the Fantastic in addition. The lantern watch-towers of a baronial castle were placed in juxta position with Doric columns employed for chimneys, while under oriel windows might be observed Italian doorways with Grecian pediments. Beyond the extensive gardens, an avenue of Spanish chestnuts at each point of the compass approached the mansion, or led into a small park which was table land, its limits opening on all sides to beautiful and extensive valleys, sparkling with cultivation, except at one point, where the river Darl formed the boundary of the domain, and then spread in many a winding through the rich country beyond.

Such was Hellingsley, the new home that Oswald Millbank was about to visit for the

first time. Coningsby and himself had travelled together as far as Darlford, where their roads diverged, and they had separated with an engagement on the part of Coningsby to visit Hellingsley on the morrow. As they had travelled along, Coningsby had frequently led the conversation to domestic topics: gradually he had talked, and talked much, of Edith. Without an obtrusive curiosity, he extracted unconsciously to his companion traits of her character and early days, which filled him with a wild and secret interest. The thought that in a few hours, he was to meet her again, infused into his being a degree of transport, which the very necessity of repressing before his companion, rendered more magical and thrilling. How often it happens in life, that we have with a grave face to discourse of the most ordinary topics, while, all the time our heart and memory are engrossed with some enchanting secret!

The Castle of his grandfather presented a far different scene on the arrival of Coningsby to that which it had offered on his first visit.

The Marquess had given him a formal permission to repair to it at his pleasure, and had instructed the steward accordingly. But he came without notice, at a season of the year when the absence of all sports made his arrival unexpected. The scattered and sauntering household roused themselves into action, and contemplated the conviction that it might be necessary to do some service for their wages. There was a stir in that vast, sleepy castle. At last the steward was found, and came forward to welcome their young master, whose simple wants were limited to the rooms he had formerly occupied.

Coningsby reached the castle a little before sunset, almost the same hour that he had arrived there more than three years ago. How much had happened in the interval! Coningsby had already lived long enough to find interest in pondering over the past. That past too must inevitably exercise a great influence over his present. He recalled his morning drive with his grandfather to the brink of that river, which was the boundary

between his own domain and Hellingsley. Who dwelt at Hellingsley now?

Restless, excited, not insensible to the difficulties, perhaps the dangers, of his position, yet full of an entrancing emotion in which all thoughts and feelings seemed to merge, Coningsby went forth into the fair gardens to muse over his love amid objects as beautiful. A rosy light hung over the rare shrubs and tall fantastic trees; while a rich yet darker tint suffused the distant woods. This euthanasia of the day exercises a strange influence on the hearts of those who love. Who has not felt it? Magical emotions that touch the immortal part!

But as for Coningsby, the mitigating hour that softens the heart made his spirit brave. Amid the ennobling sympathies of nature, the pursuits and purposes of worldly prudence and conventional advantage subsided into their essential nothingness. He willed to blend his life and fate with a being beautiful as that nature that subdued him, and he felt in his own breast the intrinsic energies that in spite

of all obstacles should mould such an imagination into reality.

He descended the slopes, now growing dimmer in the fleeting light, into the park. The stillness was almost supernatural; the jocund sounds of day had died, and the voices of the night had not commenced. His heart too was still. A sacred calm had succeeded to that distraction of emotion which had agitated him the whole day, while he had mused over his love and the infinite and insurmountable barriers that seemed to oppose his will. Now he felt one of those strong groundless convictions that are the inspiration of passion, that all would yield to him as to one holding an enchanted wand.

Onward he strolled; it seemed without purpose, yet always proceeding. A pale and then gleaming tint stole over the masses of mighty timber; and soon a glittering light flooded the lawns and glades. The moon was high in her summer heaven, and still Coningsby strolled on. He crossed the broad lawns, he traversed the bright glades: amid the gleaming

and shadowy woods, he traced his prescient way.

He came to the bank of a rushing river, foaming in the moonlight, and wafting on its blue breast the shadow of a thousand stars.

"O! River!" he said, "that rollest to my mistress, bear her, bear her, my heart!"

CHAPTER IV.

Lady Wallinger and Edith were together in the morning room of Hellingsley, the morrow after the arrival of Oswald. Edith was arranging flowers in a vase, while her aunt was embroidering a Spanish peasant in correct costume. The daughter of Millbank looked as bright and fragrant as the fair creations that surrounded her. Beautiful to watch her as she arranged their forms and composed their groups; to mark her eye glance with gratification at some happy combination of colour, or to listen to her delight as they wafted to her in gratitude

their perfume. Oswald and Sir Joseph were surveying the stables; Mr. Millbank, who had been daily expected for the last week from the factories, had not yet arrived.

"I must say he gained my heart from the first," said Lady Wallinger.

"I wish the gardener would send us more roses," said Edith.

"He is so very superior to any young man I ever met," continued Lady Wallinger.

"I think we must have this vase entirely of roses; don't you think so, aunt?" inquired her niece.

"I am very fond of roses," said Lady Wallinger. "What beautiful bouquets Mr. Coningsby gave us at Paris, Edith!"

"Beautiful!"

"I must say, I was very happy when I met Mr. Coningsby again at Cambridge," said Lady Wallinger. "It gave me much greater pleasure than seeing any of the colleges."

"How delighted Oswald seems at having Mr. Coningsby for a companion again," said Edith.

"And very naturally," said Lady Wallinger. "Oswald ought to deem himself very fortunate in having such a friend. I am sure the kindness of Mr. Coningsby when we met him at Cambridge is what I never shall forget. But he always was my favourite from the first I saw him at Paris. Do you know, Edith, I liked him the best of all your admirers?"

"Oh! no, aunt," said Edith, smiling, "not more than Lord Beaumanoir; you forget your great favourite Lord Beaumanoir."

"But I did not know Mr. Coningsby at Rome," said Lady Wallinger, "I cannot agree that any body is equal to Mr. Coningsby. I cannot tell you how pleased I am that he is our neighbour!"

As Lady Wallinger gave a finishing stroke to the jacket of her Andalusian, Edith vividly blushing, yet speaking in a voice of affected calmness, said,

"Here is Mr. Coningsby, aunt."

And truly at this moment our hero might be discerned approaching the Hall by one of the avenues; and in a few minutes, there

was a ringing at the Hall bell, and then after a short pause, the servants announced Mr. Coningsby, and ushered him into the morning room.

Edith was embarrassed; the frankness and the gaiety of her manner had deserted her; Coningsby was rather earnest than self-possessed. Each felt at first, that the presence of Lady Wallinger was a relief. The ordinary topics of conversation were in sufficient plenty; reminiscences of Paris, impressions of Hellingsley, his visit to Oxford, Lady Wallinger's visit to Cambridge. In ten minutes, their voices seemed to sound to each other as they did in the Rue de Rivoli, and their mutual perplexity had in a great degree subsided.

Oswald and Sir Joseph now entered the room, and the conversation became general. Hellingsley was the subject on which Coningsby dwelt; he was charmed with all that he had seen; wished to see more. Sir Joseph was quite prepared to accompany him; but Lady Wallinger who seemed to read Coningsby's wishes in his eyes, proposed that the inspection

should be general; and in the course of half an hour, Coningsby was walking by the side of Edith, and sympathising with all the natural charms to which her quick taste and lively expression called his notice and appreciation. Few things more delightful than a country ramble with a sweet companion! Exploring woods, wandering over green commons, loitering in shady lanes, resting on rural stiles; the air full of perfume, the heart full of bliss!

It seemed to Coningsby that he had never been happy before. A thrilling joy pervaded his being. He could have sung like a bird. His heart was as sunny as the summer scene. Past and Future were absorbed in the flowing hour; not an allusion to Paris, not a speculation on what might arrive; but infinite expressions of agreement, sympathy; a multitude of slight phrases, that however couched, had but one meaning; congeniality. He felt each moment her voice becoming more tender; his heart gushing in soft expressions; each moment he was more fascinated; her step was grace, her glance was beauty; now she touched him by some

phrase of sweet simplicity; or carried him spell-bound by her airy merriment.

Oswald assumed that Coningsby remained to dine with them. There was not even the ceremony of invitation. Coningsby could not but remember his dinner at Millbank, and the timid hostess whom he then addressed so often in vain, as he gazed on the bewitching and accomplished woman whom he now passionately loved. It was a most agreeable dinner. Oswald, happy in his friend being his guest under his own roof, indulged in unwonted gaiety.

The ladies withdrew; Sir Joseph began to talk politics, although the young men had threatened their fair companions immediately to follow them. This was the period of the Bed-Chamber Plot, when Sir Robert Peel accepted and resigned power in the course of three days. Sir Joseph, who had originally made up his mind to support a Conservative government when he deemed it inevitable, had for the last month endeavoured to compensate for this trifling error by vindicating the conduct of his friends, and reprobating the behaviour of

those who would deprive her Majesty of the "friends of her youth." Sir Joseph was a most chivalrous champion of the "friends of her youth" principle. Sir Joseph who was always moderate and conciliatory in his talk, though he would go, at any time, any lengths for his party, expressed himself to-day with extreme sobriety, as he was determined not to hurt the feelings of Mr. Coningsby, and he principally confined himself to urging temperate questions, somewhat in the following fashion:

"I admit that on the whole, under ordinary circumstances, it would perhaps have been more convenient that these appointments should have remained with Sir Robert, but don't you think that under the peculiar circumstances, being friends of her Majesty's youth? &c., &c."

Sir Joseph was extremely astonished when Coningsby replied that he thought under no circumstances should any appointment in the Royal Household be dependent on the voice of the House of Commons, though he was far

from admiring the "friends of her youth" principle, which he looked upon as very impertinent.

"But surely," said Sir Joseph, "the Minister being responsible to Parliament, it must follow that all great offices of State should be filled at his discretion."

"But where do you find this principle of Ministerial responsibility?" inquired Coningsby.

"And is not a Minister responsible to his Sovereign?" inquired Millbank.

Sir Joseph seemed a little confused. He had always heard that Ministers were responsible to Parliament; and he had a vague conviction, notwithstanding the reanimating loyalty of the Bed-Chamber Plot, that the Sovereign of England was a nonentity. He took refuge in indefinite expressions, and observed, "The Responsibility of Ministers is surely a constitutional doctrine!"

"The Ministers of the Crown are responsible to their master; they are not the Ministers of Parliament."

"But then you know virtually," said Sir

Joseph, "the Parliament, that is the House of Commons, governs the country."

"It did before 1832," said Coningsby; "but that is all past now. We got rid of that with the Venetian Constitution."

"The Venetian Constitution!" said Sir Joseph.

"To be sure," said Millbank. "We were governed in this country by the Venetian Constitution from the accession of the House of Hanover. But that yoke is past. And now, I hope we are in a state of transition from the Italian Dogeship to the English Monarchy."

"King, Lords and Commons, the Venetian Constitution!" exclaimed Sir Joseph.

"But they were phrases," said Coningsby, "not facts. The King was a Doge; the Cabinet the Council of Ten. Your Parliament, that you call Lords and Commons, was nothing more than the Great Council of Nobles."

"The resemblance was complete," said Millbank, "and no wonder, for it was not accidental; the Venetian Constitution was intentionally copied."

"We should have had the Venetian Republic in 1640," said Coningsby, "had it not been for the Puritans. Geneva beat Venice."

"I am sure these ideas are not very generally known," said Sir Joseph bewildered.

"Because you have had your history written by the Venetian party," said Coningsby, "and it has been their interest to conceal them."

"I will venture to say that there are very few men on our side in the House of Commons," said Sir Joseph, "who are aware that they were born under a Venetian Constitution."

"Let us go to the ladies," said Millbank smiling.

Edith was reading a letter as they entered.

"A letter from papa," she exclaimed looking up at her brother with great animation. "We may expect him every day, and yet, alas! he cannot fix one."

They now all spoke of Millbank, and Coningsby was happy that he was familiar with the scene. At length he ventured to say to Edith,

"You once made me a promise which you never fulfilled. I shall claim it to-night."

"And what can that be?"

"The song that you promised me at Millbank more than three years ago."

"Your memory is very good."

"It has dwelt upon the subject."

Then they spoke for awhile of other recollections, and then, Coningsby appealing to Lady Wallinger for her influence, Edith rose and took up her guitar. Her voice was rich and sweet; the air she sang gay, even fantastically frolick; such as the girls of Granada chaunt trooping home from some country festival; her soft, dark eye brightened with joyous sympathy; and ever and anon, with an arch grace, she beat the guitar, in chorus, with her pretty hand.

The moon wanes; and Coningsby must leave these enchanted halls. Oswald walked homeward with him, until he reached the domain of his grandfather. Then mounting his horse, Coningsby bade his friend farewell till the morrow, and made his best way to the Castle.

CHAPTER V.

THERE is a romance in every life. The emblazoned page of Coningsby's existence was now open. It had been prosperous before; with some moments of excitement; some of delight; but they had all found, as it were, their origin in worldly considerations, or been inevitably mixed up with them. At Paris for example, he loved, or thought he loved. But there not an hour could elapse without his meeting some person, or hearing something, which disturbed the beauty of his emotions or broke his spell-bound thoughts. There was his grandfather hating the Millbanks or Sidonia loving them;

and common people in the common world making common observations on them; asking who they were, or telling who they were; and brushing the bloom of all life's fresh delicious fancies with their coarse handling.

But now his feelings were ethereal. He loved, passionately—and he loved in a scene and in a society as sweet, as pure, and as refined, as his imagination and his heart. There was no malicious gossip, no callous chatter, to profane his ear and desecrate his sentiment. All that he heard or saw was worthy of the summer sky, the still green woods, the gushing river, the gardens and terraces, the stately and fantastic dwellings, among which his life now glided as in some dainty and gorgeous masque.

All the soft, social domestic sympathies of his nature which, however abundant, had never been cultivated, were developed by the life he was now leading. It was not merely that he lived in the constant presence, and under the constant influence of one whom he adored, that made him so happy. He was surrounded by beings who found felicity in the interchange of kind

feelings and kind words; in the cultivation of happy talents and refined tastes; and the enjoyment of a life which their own good sense and own good hearts made them both comprehend and appreciate. Ambition lost much of its splendour, even his lofty aspirations something of their hallowing impulse of paramount duty, when Coningsby felt how much ennobling delight was consistent with the seclusion of a private station; and mused over an existence to be passed amid woods and waterfalls with a fair hand locked in his; or surrounded by his friends in some ancestral hall.

The morning after his first visit to Hellingsley, Coningsby rejoined his friends, as he had promised Oswald at their breakfast table; and day after day, he came with the early sun, and left them only when the late moon silvered the keep of Coningsby Castle. Mr. Millbank who wrote daily, and was daily to be expected, did not arrive. A week, a week of unbroken bliss, had vanished away—passed in long rides and longer walks; sunset saunterings, and sometimes moonlit strolls; talking of flowers, and

thinking of things even sweeter; listening to delicious songs, and sometimes reading aloud some bright romance, or some inspiring lay.

One day, Coningsby who arrived at the Hall unexpectedly late; indeed it was some hours past noon, for he had been detained by despatches which arrived at the Castle from Mr. Rigby and which required his interposition; found the ladies alone, and was told that Sir Joseph and Oswald were at the fishing cottage, where they wished him to join them. He was in no haste to do this; and Lady Wallinger proposed, that when they felt inclined to ramble, they should all walk down to the fishing cottage together. So seating himself by the side of Edith who was tinting a sketch which she had made of a rich oriel of Hellingsley, the morning passed away in that slight and yet subtle talk in which a lover delights, and in which, while asking a thousand questions, that seem at the first glance, sufficiently trifling, he is indeed often conveying a meaning that is not expressed, or attempting to discover a feeling that is hidden. And these are occasions, when glances

meet, and glances are withdrawn: the tongue may speak idly, the eye is more eloquent; and often more true.

Coningsby looked up; Lady Wallinger who had more than once announced, that she was going to put on her bonnet, was gone. Yet still he continued to talk trifles; and still Edith listened.

"Of all that you have told me," said Edith, "nothing pleases me so much as your description of St. Geneviève. How much I should like to catch the deer at sunset on the heights! What a pretty drawing it would make!"

"You would like Eustace Lyle," said Coningsby. "He is so shy and yet so ardent."

"You have such a band of friends, Oswald was saying this morning there was no one who had so many devoted friends."

"We are all united by sympathy; it is the only bond of friendship; and yet friendship—"

"Edith," said Lady Wallinger looking into the room from the garden with her bonnet on,

" you will find me roaming on the terrace."

" We come, dear aunt."

And yet they did not move. There were yet a few pencil touches to be given to the tinted sketch; Coningsby would cut the pencils.

" Would you give me," he said, " some slight memorial of Hellingsby and your art! I would not venture to hope for anything half so beautiful as this; but the slightest sketch. I should so like when away to have it hanging in my room."

A blush suffused the cheek of Edith, she turned her head a little aside, as if she were arranging some drawings. And then she said in a somewhat hushed and hesitating voice,

" I am sure I will do so; and with pleasure. A view of the Hall itself; I think that would be the best memorial. Where shall we take it from? We will decide in our walk," and she rose, and promising immediately to return, left the room.

Coningsby leant over the mantle in deep abstraction, gazing vacantly on a miniature of the

father of Edith. A light step roused him; she had returned, Unconsciously he greeted her with a glance of ineffable tenderness.

They went forth; it was a grey, sultry day. Indeed it was the covered sky which had led to the fishing scheme of the morning; Sir Joseph was a very expert and accomplished angler; and the Darl was renowned for its sport. They lingered before they reached the terrace where they were to find Lady Wallinger, observing the different points of view which the Hall presented, and debating which was to form the subject of Coningsby's drawing; for already it was to be not merely a sketch, but a drawing, the most finished that the bright and effective pencil of Edith could achieve. If it really were to be placed in his room, and were to be a memorial of Hellingsley, her artistic reputation demanded a master-piece.

They reached the terrace: Lady Wallinger was not there; nor could they observe her in the vicinity. Coningsby was quite certain that she had gone onward to the fishing cottage, and expected them to follow her; and he convinced

Edith of the justness of his opinion. To the fishing cottage therefore they bent their steps. They emerged from the gardens into the Park, sauntering over the table land, and seeking as much as possible the shade in the soft but oppressive atmosphere. At the limit of the table land their course lay by a wild and winding path through a gradual and wooded declivity. While they were yet in this craggy and romantic woodland, the big, fervent drops began to fall. Coningsby urged Edith to seek at once a natural shelter; but she, who knew the country, assured him that the fishing cottage was close by, and that they might reach it before the rain could do them any harm.

And truly at this moment emerging from the wood, they found themselves in the valley of the Darl. The river here was narrow and winding, but full of life; rushing and clear, but for the dark sky it reflected; with high banks of turf and tall trees; the silver birch, above all others, in clustering groups; infinitely picturesque. At the turn of the river, about two hundred yards distant, Coningsby observed the

low, dark roof of the fishing cottage on its banks. They descended from the woods to the margin of the stream, by a flight of turfen steps, Coningsby holding Edith's hand as he guided her progress.

The drops became thicker; they reached, at a rapid pace, the cottage. The absent boat indicated that Sir Joseph and Oswald were on the river. The cottage was an old building of rustic logs, with a very shelving roof so that you might obtain sufficient shelter without entering its walls. Coningsby found a rough garden seat for Edith. The shower was now violent.

Nature, like man, sometimes weeps from gladness. It is the joy and tenderness of her heart that seek relief; and these are summer showers. In this instance, the vehemence of her emotion was transient, though the tears kept stealing down her cheek for a long time, and gentle sighs and sobs might for some period be distinguished. The oppressive atmosphere had evaporated; the grey, sullen tint had disappeared; a soft breeze came dancing up

the stream; a glowing light fell upon the woods and waters; the perfume of trees and flowers and herbs floated around. There was a carolling of birds; a hum of happy insects in the air; freshness and stir, and a sense of joyous life, pervaded all things; it seemed that the heart of all creation opened.

Coningsby, after repeatedly watching the shower with Edith, and speculating on its progress which did not much annoy them, had seated himself on a log almost at her feet. And assuredly a maiden and a youth more beautiful and engaging had seldom met before in a scene more fresh and fair. Edith on her rustic seat watched the now blue and foaming river, and the birch trees with a livelier tint, and quivering in the sunset air; an expression of tranquil bliss suffused her beautiful brow, and spoke from the thrilling tenderness of her soft dark eye. Coningsby gazed on that countenance with a glance of entranced rapture. His cheek was flushed, his eye gleamed with dazzling lustre. She turned her head, she met that glance, and, troubled, she withdrew her own.

"Edith," he said, in a tone of tremulous passion, "let me call you Edith! Yes," he continued, gently taking her hand, "Let me call you my Edith! I love you!"

She did not withdraw her hand; but turned away a face flushed as the impending twilight.

CHAPTER VI.

It was past the dinner hour when Edith and Coningsby reached the Hall; an embarrassing circumstance, but mitigated by the conviction, that they had not to encounter a very critical inspection. What then were their feelings, when the first servant that they met informed them, that Mr. Millbank had arrived! Edith never could have believed, that the return of her beloved father to his home could ever have been to her other than a cause of delight. And yet now she trembled when she heard the announcement. The mysteries of love were fast involving her existence. But this was not the

season of meditation. Her heart was still agitated by the tremulous admission that she responded to that fervent and adoring love whose eloquent music still sounded in her ear, and the pictures of whose fanciful devotion flitted over her agitated vision. Unconsciously she pressed the arm of Coningsby as the servant spoke, and then without looking into his face, whispering him to be quick, she sprang away.

As for Coningsby, notwithstanding the elation of his heart, and the ethereal joy which flowed in all his veins, the name of Mr. Millbank sounded something like a knell. However this was not the time to reflect. He obeyed the hint of Edith; made the most rapid toilette that ever was consummated by a happy lover, and in a few minutes entered the drawing-room of Hellingsley; to encounter the gentleman whom he hoped by some means or other, quite inconceivable, might some day be transformed into his father-in-law, and the fulfilment of his consequent duties towards whom he had commenced by keeping him waiting for dinner.

"How do you do, sir?" said Mr. Millbank,

extending his hand to Coningsby. "You seem to have taken a long walk."

Coningsby looked round to the kind Lady Wallinger, and half addressed his murmured answer to her, explaining how they had lost her, and their way, and were caught in a storm or a shower, which as it terminated about three hours back, and the fishing cottage was little more than a mile from the Hall, very satisfactorily accounted for their not being in time for dinner.

Lady Wallinger then said something about the lowering clouds having frightened her from the terrace, and Sir Joseph and Oswald talked a little of their sport, and of their having seen an otter; but there was or at least there seemed to Coningsby a tone of general embarrassment which distressed him. The fact is keeping people for dinner under any circumstances is distressing. They are obliged to talk at the very moment when they wish to use their powers of expression for a very different purpose. They are faint, and conversation makes them more exhausted. A gentleman too, fond of his fami-

ly, who in turn are devoted to him, making a great and inconvenient effort to reach them by dinner time; to please and surprise them; and finding them all dispersed, dinner so late, that he might have reached home in good time without any great inconvenient effort, his daughter whom he has wished a thousand times to embrace, taking a singularly long ramble with no other companion than a young gentleman, whom he did not exactly expect to see; all these are circumstances individually perhaps slight, and yet encountered collectively, it may be doubted whether they would not a little ruffle even the sweetest temper.

Mr. Millbank too had not the sweetest temper, though not a bad one; a little quick and fiery. But then he had a kind heart. And when Edith, who had providentially sent down a message to order dinner, entered and embraced him at the very moment that dinner was announced, her father forgot everything in his joy in seeing her, and his pleasure in being surrounded by his friends. He gave his hand to Lady Wallinger; and Sir Joseph led away

his niece. Coningsby put his arm round the astonished neck of Oswald as if they were once more in the playing fields of Eton.

"By Jove! my dear fellow," he exclaimed, "I am so sorry we kept your father for dinner."

As Edith headed her father's table, according to his rigid rule, Coningsby was on one side of her. They never spoke so little; Coningsby would have never unclosed his lips, had he followed his humour. He was in a stupor of happiness; the dining-room took the appearance of the fishing cottage; and he saw nothing but the flowing river. Lady Wallinger was however next to him, and that was a relief; for he felt always she was his friend. Sir Joseph a good-hearted man, and on subjects with which he was acquainted full of sound sense, was invaluable to-day, for he entirely kept up the conversation, speaking of things which greatly interested Mr. Millbank. And so their host soon recovered his good temper; he addressed several times his observations to Coningsby, and was careful to take wine with

him. On the whole, affairs went on flowingly enough. The gentlemen indeed stayed much longer over their wine than on the preceding days, and Coningsby did not venture on the liberty of quitting the room before his host. It was as well. Edith required repose. She tried to seek it on the bosom of her aunt, as she breathed to her the delicious secret of her life. When the gentlemen returned to the drawing-room, the ladies were not there.

This rather disturbed Mr. Millbank again; he had not seen enough of his daughter; he wished to hear her sing. But Edith managed to reappear; and even to sing. Then Coningsby went up to her and asked her to sing the song of the Girls of Granada. She said in a low voice, and with a fond yet serious look,

"I am not in the mood for such a song, but if you wish me—"

She sang it and with inexpressible grace, and with an arch vivacity, that to a fine observer would have singularly contrasted with the almost

solemn and even troubled expression of her countenance a moment afterwards.

The day was about to die; the day the most important, the most precious, in the lives of Harry Coningsby and Edith Millbank. Words had been spoken, vows breathed, which were to influence their careers for ever. For them hereafter there was to be but one life, one destiny, one world. Each of them was still in such a state of tremulous excitement, that neither had found time or occasion to ponder over the mighty result. They both required solitude; they both longed to be alone. Coningsby rose to depart. He pressed the soft hand of Edith, and his glance spoke his soul.

"We shall see you at breakfast to-morrow, Coningsby!" said Oswald, very loud, knowing that the presence of his father would make Coningsby hesitate about coming. Edith's heart fluttered; but she said nothing. It was with delight she heard her father, after a moment's pause, say,

"Oh! I beg we may have that pleasure."

"Not quite at so early an hour," said Co-

ningsby, "but if you will permit me, I hope to have the pleasure of hearing from you to-morrow, sir, that your journey has not fatigued you."

CHAPTER VII.

To be alone; to have no need of feigning a tranquillity he could not feel; of coining common-place courtesy, when his heart was gushing with rapture; this was a great relief for Coningsby, though gained by a separation from Edith.

The deed was done; he had breathed his long brooding passion, he had received the sweet expression of her sympathy, he had gained the long coveted heart. Youth, beauty, love, the innocence of unsophisticated breasts, and the inspiration of an exquisite nature, combined to fashion the spell that now entranced his life.

He turned to gaze upon the moonlit towers and peaked roofs of Hellingsley. Silent and dream-like, the picturesque pile rested on its broad terrace flooded with the silver light, and surrounded by the quaint bowers of its fantastic gardens tipped by the glittering beam. Half hid in deep shadow, half sparkling in the midnight blaze, he recognized the oriel window that had been the subject of the morning's sketch. Almost he wished there should be some sound to assure him of his reality. But nothing broke the all-pervading stillness. Was his life to be as bright and as tranquil? And what was to be his life?

Whither was he to bear the beautiful bride he had gained? Were the portals of Coningsby the proud and hospitable gates that were to greet her? How long would they greet him after the achievement of the last four and twenty hours was known to their Lord? Was this the return for the confiding kindness of his grandsire? That he should pledge his troth to the daughter of that grandsire's foe?

Away with such dark and scaring visions! Is it not the noon of a summer night fragrant with the breath of gardens, bright with the beam that lovers love, and soft with the breath of Ausonian breezes? Within that sweet and stately residence, dwells there not a maiden fair enough to revive chivalry; who is even now thinking of him as she leans on her pensive hand, or if perchance she dream, recalls him in her visions? And himself, is he one who would cry craven with such a lot! What avail his golden youth, his high blood, his daring and devising spirit, and all his stores of wisdom, if they help not now! Does not he feel the energy divine that can confront fate and carve out fortunes? Besides it is nigh Midsummer Eve, and what should fairies reign for, but to aid such a bright pair as this?

He recalls a thousand times the scene, the moment, in which but a few hours past, he dared to tell her that he loved; he recalls a thousand times the still, small voice, that murmured her agitated felicity; more than a thousand times, for his heart clenched the idea

as a diver grasps a gem, he recalls the enraptured yet gentle embrace, that had sealed upon her blushing cheek his mystical and delicious sovereignty.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE morning broke lowering and thunderous; small white clouds, dull and immovable, studded the leaden sky; the waters of the rushing Darl seemed to have become black and almost stagnant; the terraces of Hellingsley looked like the hard lines of a model; and the mansion itself had a harsh and metallic character. Before the chief portal of his Hall, the elder Millbank, with an air of some anxiety, surveyed the landscape and the heavens, as if he were speculating on the destiny of the day.

Often his eye wandered over the park; often with an uneasy and restless step he paced the

raised walk before him. The clock of Hellingsley church had given the chimes of noon. His son and Coningsby appeared at the end of one of the avenues. His eye lightened; his lip became compressed; he advanced to meet them.

"Are you going to fish to-day, Oswald?" he inquired of his son.

"We had some thoughts of it, sir."

"A fine day for sport, I should think," he observed as he turned towards the Hall with them.

Coningsby remarked the fanciful beauty of the portal; its twisted columns, and Caryatides carved in dark oak.

"Yes, it's very well," said Millbank, "but I really do not know why I came here; my presence is an effort. Oswald does not care for the place; none of us do, I believe."

"Oh! I like it now father; and Edith dotes on it."

"She was very happy at Millbank," said the father rather sharply.

"We are all of us happy at Millbank," said Oswald.

"I was much struck with the valley and the whole settlement when I first saw it," said Coningsby.

"Suppose you go and see about the tackle, Oswald," said Mr. Millbank, "and Mr. Coningsby and I will take a stroll on the terrace in the meantime."

The habit of obedience which was supreme in this family instantly carried Oswald away, though he was rather puzzled why his father should be so particularly anxious about the preparation of the fishing tackle, as he very rarely used it. His son had no sooner departed than Mr. Millbank turned to Coningsby and said very abruptly.

"You have never seen my own room here, Mr. Coningsby; step in; for I wish to say a word or two to you." And thus speaking, he advanced before the astonished, and rather agitated Coningsby, and led the way through a door and long passage to a room of moderate dimensions, partly furnished as a library, and full of parliamentary papers and blue books. Shutting the door with some earnestness and

pointing to a chair, he begged his guest to be seated. Both in their chairs, Mr. Millbank clearing his throat, said without preface, "I have reason to believe, Mr. Coningsby, that you are attached to my daughter."

"I have been attached to her for a long time; most ardently," replied Coningsby in a calm and rather measured tone, but looking very pale.

"And I have reason to believe that she returns your attachment," said Mr. Millbank.

"I believe she deigns—not to disregard it," said Coningsby, his white cheek becoming scarlet.

"It is then a mutual attachment, which if cherished, must produce mutual unhappiness," said Mr. Millbank.

"I would fain believe the reverse," said Coningsby.

"Why?" inquired Mr. Millbank.

"Because I believe she possesses every charm, quality and virtue, that can bless man; and because, though I can make her no equivalent return, I have a heart, if I know myself, that would struggle to deserve her."

"I know you to be a man of sense; I believe you to be a man of honour," replied Mr. Millbank. "As the first, you must feel that an union between you and my daughter is impossible; what then should be your duty as a man of correct principle is obvious."

"I could conceive that our union might be attended with difficulties," said Coningsby in a somewhat deprecating tone.

"Sir, it is impossible," repeated Mr. Millbank interrupting him though not with harshness, "that is to say there is no conceivable marriage which could be effected at greater sacrifices, and which would occasion greater misery."

"The sacrifices are more apparent to me than the misery," said Coningsby, "and even they may be imaginary."

"The sacrifices and the misery are certain and inseparable," said Mr. Millbank. "Come now, see how we stand! I speak without reserve, for this is a subject which cannot permit misconceptions, but with no feeling towards you, sir, but fair and very friendly ones. You are the grandson of my Lord Monmouth; at present

enjoying his favour, but dependent on his bounty. You may be the heir of his wealth to-morrow, and to-morrow you may be the object of his hatred and persecution. Your grandfather and myself are foes: bitter, irreclaimable, to the death. It is idle to mince phrases; I do not vindicate our mutual feelings, I may regret that they have ever arisen; I may regret it especially at this exigency. They are not the feelings of good Christians; they may be altogether to be deplored and unjustifiable; but they exist, mutually exist; and have not been confined to words. Lord Monmouth would crush me had he the power, like a worm; and I have curbed his proud fortunes often. Were it not for this feeling, I should not be here; I purchased this estate merely to annoy him, as I have done a thousand other acts merely for his discomfiture and mortification. In our long encounter I have done him infinitely more injury than he could do me; I have been on the spot, I am active, vigilant, the maker of my fortunes. He is an Epicurean, continually in foreign parts, obliged to leave the fulfilment of his will to

others. But for these very reasons his hate is more intense. I can afford to hate him less than he hates me—I have injured him more. Here are feelings to exist between human beings! But they do exist—and now you are to go to this man, and ask his sanction to marry my daughter!"

"But I would appease these hatreds; I would allay these dark passions, the origin of which I know not, but which never could justify the end, and which lead to so much misery. I would appeal to my grandfather—I would show him Edith."

"He has looked upon as fair even as Edith," said Mr. Millbank rising suddenly from his seat, and pacing the room, "and did that melt his heart? The experience of your own lot should have guarded you from the perils that you have so rashly meditated encountering, and the misery which you have been preparing for others besides yourself. Is my daughter to be treated like your mother? And by the same hand? Your mother's family were not Lord Monmouth's foes. They were simple and inno-

cent people, free from all the bad passions of our nature, and ignorant of the world's ways. But because they were not noble, because they could trace no mystified descent from a foreign invader or the sacrilegious minion of some spoliating despot, their daughter was hunted from the family which should have exulted to receive her, and the land of which she was the native ornament. Why should a happier lot await you than fell to your parents? You are in the same position as your father; you meditate the same act. The only difference being aggravating circumstances in your case, which even if I were a member of the same order as my Lord Monmouth, would prevent the possibility of a prosperous union. Marry Edith, and you blast all the prospects of your life, and entail on her a sense of unceasing humiliation. Would you do this? Should I permit you to do this?"

Coningsby with his head resting on his arm his face a little shaded, his eyes fixed on the ground, listened in silence. There was a pause; broken by Coningsby, as in a low voice, with out changing his posture or raising his glance,

he said: "It seems, sir, that you were acquainted with my mother?"

"I knew sufficient of her," replied Mr. Millbank with a kindling cheek, "to learn the misery that a woman may entail on herself by marrying out of her condition. I have bred my children in a respect for their class. I believe they have imbibed my feeling; though it is strange how in the commerce of the world, chance, in their friendships, has apparently baffled my designs."

"Oh! do not say it is chance, sir," said Coningsby looking up, and speaking with much fervour. "The feelings that animate me towards your family are not the feelings of chance: they are the creation of sympathy; tried by time, tested by thought. And must they perish? Can they perish? They were inevitable; they are indestructible. Yes, sir, it is in vain to speak of the enmities that are fostered between you and my grandfather; the love that exists between your daughter and myself is stronger than all your hatreds."

"You speak like a young man, and a young

man that is in love," said Mr. Millbank. "This is mere rhapsody; it will vanish in an instant before the reality of life. And you have arrived at that reality," he continued, speaking with emphasis, leaning over the back of his chair and looking steadily at Coningsby with his grey, sagacious eye, "My daughter and yourself can meet no more."

"It is impossible you can be so cruel!" exclaimed Coningsby.

"So kind; kind to you both; for I wish to be kind to you as well as to her. You are entitled to kindness from us all; though I will tell you now, that, years ago, when the news arrived that my son's life had been saved, and had been saved by one who bore the name of Coningsby, I had a presentiment great as was the blessing, that it might lead to unhappiness."

"I can answer for the misery of one," said Coningsby, in a tone of great despondency. "I feel as if my sun were set. Oh! why should there be such wretchedness! Why are there family hatreds and party feuds! Why am I the most wretched of men!"

"My good young friend, you will live I doubt not to be a very happy one. Happiness is not as we are apt to fancy entirely dependent on these contingencies. It is the lot of most men to endure what you are now suffering, and they can look back to such conjunctures through the vista of years with calmness."

"I may see Edith now?"

"Frankly, I should say, no. My daughter is in her room; I have had some conversation with her. Of course she suffers not less than yourself. To see her again, will only aggravate woe. You leave under this roof, sir, some sad memories, but no unkind ones. It is not likely that I can serve you, or that you may want my aid; but whatever may be in my power, remember you may command it—without reserve and without restraint. If I control myself now, it is not because I do not respect your affliction, but because in the course of my life I have felt too much not to be able to command my feelings."

"You never could have felt what I feel now," said Coningsby, in a tone of anguish.

"You touch on delicate ground," said Millbank, "yet from me you may learn to suffer. There was a being once, not less fair than the peerless girl that you would fain call your own, and her heart was my proud possession. There were no family feuds to baffle our union, nor was I dependent on anything, but the energies which had already made me flourishing. What happiness was mine! It was the first dream of my life, and it was the last; my solitary passion, the memory of which softens my heart. Ah! you dreaming scholars, and fine gentlemen who saunter through life, you think there is no romance in the loves of a man who lives in the toil and turmoil of business. You are in deep, error. Amid my career of travail, there was ever a bright form which animated exertion; inspired my invention, nerved my energy, and to gain whose heart and life, I first made many of those discoveries and entered into many of those speculations, that have since been the foundation of my wide prosperity.

"Her faith was pledged to me; I lived upon her image; the day was even talked of when

I should bear her to the home that I had proudly prepared for her.

"There came a young noble, a warrior who had never seen war, glittering with gew-gaws. He was quartered in the town where the mistress of my heart, and who was soon to share my life and my fortunes, resided. The tale is too bitter not to be brief. He saw her, he sighed; I will hope that he loved her; she gave him with rapture the heart which perhaps she found she had never given me; and instead of bearing the name I had once hoped to have called her by, she pledged her faith at the altar to one who like you was called—CONINGSBY."

"My mother!"

"You see, I too have had my griefs."

"Dear sir," said Coningsby, rising and taking Mr. Millbank's hand, "I am most wretched; and yet I wish to part from you even with affection. You have explained circumstances that have long perplexed me. A curse I fear is on our families. I have not mind enough at this moment even to ponder on my situation. My head is a chaos. I go; yes, I quit this

Hellingsley, where I came to be so happy, where I have been so happy. Nay, let me go, dear sir! I must be alone, I must try to think. And tell her—no, tell her nothing. God will guard over us!"

Proceeding down the avenue with a rapid and distempered step, his countenance lost as it were in a wild abstraction, Coningsby encountered Oswald Millbank. He stopped, collected his turbulent thoughts, and throwing on Oswald one glance that seemed at the same time to communicate woe and to demand sympathy, flung himself into his arms.

"My friend!" he exclaimed, and then added in a broken voice, "I need a friend."

Then in a hurried, impassioned, and somewhat incoherent strain, leaning on Oswald's arm, as they walked on together, he poured forth all that had occurred, all of which he had dreamed; his baffled bliss, his actual despair. Alas! there was little room for solace, and yet all that earnest affection could inspire and a sagacious brain and a brave spirit were offered for his support, if not his

consolation, by the friend who was devoted to him.

In the midst of this deep communion, teeming with every thought and sentiment that could enchain and absorb the spirit of man, they came to one of the park gates of Coningsby. Millbank stopped. The command of his father was peremptory, that no member of his family under any circumstances or for any consideration should set his foot on that domain. Lady Wallinger had once wished to have seen the Castle, and Coningsby was only too happy in the prospect of escorting her and Edith over the place; but Oswald had then at once put his veto on the project, as a thing forbidden; and which if put in practice his father would never pardon. So it passed off, and now Oswald himself was at the gates of that very domain with his friend who was about to enter them, his friend whom he might never see again, that Coningsby who from their boyish days had been the idol of his life, whom he had lived to see appeal to his affections and his sympathy, and whom Oswald was now going

to desert in the midst of his lonely and unsolaced woe.

"I ought not to enter here," said Oswald holding the hand of Coningsby as he hesitated to advance; "and yet there are duties more sacred even than obedience to a father. I cannot leave you thus, friend of my best heart!"

The morning passed away in unceasing yet fruitless speculation on the future. One moment something was to happen, the next nothing could occur. Sometimes a beam of hope flashed over the fancy of Coningsby, and jumping up from the turf, on which they were reclining, he seemed to exult in his renovated energies; and then this sanguine paroxysm was succeeded by a fit of depression so dark and dejected, that nothing but the presence of Oswald seemed to prevent Coningsby from flinging himself into the waters of the Darl.

The day was fast declining, and the inevitable moment of separation was at hand. Oswald wished to appear at the dinner table of Hel-

lingsley that no suspicion might arise in the mind of his father of his having accompanied Coningsby home. But just as he was beginning to mention the necessity of his departure, a flash of lightning seemed to transfix the heavens. The sky was very dark; though studded here and there with dingy spots. The young men sprang up at the same time.

"We had better get out of these trees," said Oswald.

"We had better get to the Castle," said Coningsby.

A clap of thunder that seemed to make the park quake broke over their heads, followed by some thick drops. The Castle was close at hand; Oswald had avoided entering it; but the impending storm was so menacing, that hurried on by Coningsby he could make no resistance; and in a few minutes, the companions were watching the tempest from the windows of a room in Coningsby Castle.

The forked lightning flashed and scintillated from every quarter of the horizon: the thunder

broke over the Castle as if the keep were rocking with artillery: amid the momentary pauses of the explosion, the rain was heard descending like dissolving water-spouts.

Nor was this one of those transient tempests that often agitate the summer. Time advanced, and its fierceness was little mitigated. Sometimes there was a lull, though the violence of the rain never appeared to diminish; but then as in some pitched fight between contending hosts, when the fervour of the field seems for a moment to allay, fresh squadrons arrive and renew the hottest strife, so a low moaning wind that was now at intervals faintly heard, bore up a great reserve of electric vapour, that formed as it were into field, in the space between the Castle and Hellingsley, and then discharged its violence on that fated district.

Coningsby and Oswald exchanged looks. "You must not think of going home at present, my dear fellow," said the first. "I am sure your father would not be displeased. There is not a being here who even knows you, and if they did—what then?"

The servant entered the room, and inquired whether the gentlemen were ready for dinner.

"By all means; come, my dear Millbank, I feel reckless as the tempest; let us drown our cares in wine!"

Coningsby in fact was exhausted by all the agitation of the day, and all the harassing spectres of the future. He found wine a momentary solace. He ordered the servants away, and for a moment felt a degree of wild satisfaction in the company of the brother of Edith.

Thus they sate for a long time, talking only of one subject, and repeating almost the same things, yet both felt happier in being together. Oswald had risen, and opening the window, examined the approaching night. The storm had lulled, though the rain still fell; in the west was a streak of light. In a quarter of an hour, he calculated on departing. As he was watching the wind, he thought he heard the sound of wheels, which reminded him of Coningsby's promise to lend him a light carriage for his return.

They sate down once more; they had filled their glasses for the last time; to pledge to their faithful friendship, and the happiness of Coningsby and Edith; when the door of the room opened, and there appeared—MR. RIGBY.

END OF BOOK VII.

BOOK VIII.

CHAPTER I.

It was the heart of the London season, nearly four years ago; twelve months having almost elapsed since the occurrence of those painful passages at Hellingsley which closed the last book of this history; and long lines of carriages an hour before midnight, up the classic mount of St. James and along Piccadilly, intimated that the world were received at some grand entertainment in Arlington Street.

It was the town mansion of the noble family

beneath whose roof at Beaumanoir we have more than once introduced the reader, to gain whose courtyard was at this moment the object of emulous coachmen, and to enter whose saloons was to reward the martyr-like patience of their lords and ladies.

Among the fortunate, who had already succeeded in bowing to their hostess, were two gentlemen, who ensconced in a good position surveyed the scene, and made their observations on the passing guests. They were gentlemen, who, to judge from their general air, and the great consideration with which they were treated by those who were occasionally in their vicinity, were personages whose criticism bore authority.

"I say, Jemmy," said the eldest, a dandy who had dined with the Regent; but who still was a dandy, and who enjoyed life almost as much as in the days when Carlton House occupied the Terrace which still bears its name. "I say, Jemmy; what a load of young fellows there are! Don't know their names at all. Begin to think fellows are

younger than they used to be. Amazing load of young fellows indeed!"

At this moment an individual who came under the fortunate designation of a young fellow; but whose assured carriage hardly intimated that this was his first season in London, came up to the junior of the two critics; and said, "A pretty turn you played us yesterday at Whites', Melton. We waited dinner nearly an hour!"

"My dear fellow, I am infinitely sorry; but I was obliged to go down to Windsor, and I missed the return train. A good dinner? Who had you?"

"A capital party, only you were wanted. We had Beaumanoir, and Vere, and Jack Tufton, and Spraggs."

"Was Spraggs rich?"

"Wasn't he! I have not done laughing yet. He told us a story about the little Biron, who was over here last year—I knew her at Paris—and an Indian screen. Killing! Get him to tell it to you. The richest thing you ever heard!"

"Who's your friend?" inquired Mr. Melton's companion, as the young man moved away.

"Sir Charles Buckhurst."

"A—h! That is Sir Charles Buckhurst. Glad to have seen him. They say he is going it."

"He knows what he is about."

"Egad, so they all do. A young fellow now of two or three and twenty knows the world as men used to do after as many years of scrapes. I wonder where there is such a thing as a greenhorn. Effie Crabs says the reason he gives up his house is, that he has cleaned out the old generation; and that the new generation would clean him."

"Buckhurst is not in that sort of way: he swears by Henry Sydney, a younger son of the Duke, whom you don't know; and young Coningsby; a sort of new set; new ideas and all that sort of thing. Beau tells me a good deal about it; and when I was staying with the Everinghams at Easter, they were full of it. Coningsby had just returned from his travels, and they were quite on the 'qui

vive.' Lady Everingham is one of their set. I don't know what it is exactly; but I think we shall hear more of it."

"A sort of Animal Magnetism, or Unknown Tongues, I take it from your description," said his companion.

"Well, I don't know what it is," said Mr. Melton; "but it has got hold of all the young fellows who have just come out. Beau is a little bit himself. I had some idea of giving my mind to it; they made such a fuss about it at Everingham; but it requires a devilish deal of history I believe, and all that sort of thing."

"Ah! that's a bore," said his companion. "It's difficult to turn to with a new thing when you are not in the habit of it. I never could manage charades."

Mr. Ormsby passing by, stopped, "They told me you had the gout, Cassilis?" he said to Mr. Melton's companion.

"So I had; but I have found out a fellow who cures the gout instanter. Tom Needham sent him to me. A German fellow; pumice

stone pills; sort of a charm I believe, and all that kind of thing; they say it rubs the gout out of you. I sent him to Luxborough who was very bad; cured him directly; Luxborough swears by him."

"Luxborough believes in the Millennium," said Mr. Ormsby.

"But here's a new thing that Melton has been telling me of that all the world is going to believe in," said Mr. Cassilis, "something patronized by Lady Everingham."

"A very good patroness," said Mr. Ormsby.

"Have you heard anything about it?" continued Mr. Cassilis. "Young Coningsby brought it from abroad, didn't you say so, Jemmy?"

"No, no, my dear fellow; it is not at all that sort of thing."

"But they say it requires a deuced deal of history," continued Mr. Cassilis. "One must brush up one's Goldsmith. Canterton used to be the fellow for history at Whites'. He was always boring one with William the Conqueror, Julius Cæsar and all that sort of thing."

"I tell you what," said Mr. Ormsby, looking

both sly and solemn, "I should not be surprised if some day or another, we have a history about Lady Everingham and young Coningsby."

"Poh!" said Mr. Melton, "he is engaged to be married to her sister, Lady Theresa."

"The deuce!" said Mr. Ormsby, "well, you are a friend of the family, and I suppose you know."

"He is a devilish good-looking fellow, that young Coningsby," said Mr. Cassilis. "All the women are in love with him, they say. Lady Eleanor Ducie quite raves about him."

"By the bye, his grandfather has been very unwell," said Mr. Ormsby, looking mysteriously.

"I saw Lady Monmouth here just now," said Mr. Melton.

"Oh! he is quite well again," said Mr. Ormsby.

"Got an odd story at Whites' that Lord Monmouth was going to separate from her," said Mr. Cassilis.

"No foundation," said Mr. Ormsby, shaking his head.

"They are not going to separate, I believe,"

said Mr. Melton, "but I rather think there was a foundation for the rumour."

Mr. Ormsby still shook his head.

"Well," continued Mr. Melton, "all I know is that it was looked upon last winter at Paris as a settled thing."

"There was some story about some Hungarian," said Mr. Cassilis.

"No, that blew over," said Mr. Melton, "it was Trautsmandorff the row was about."

All this time Mr. Ormsby, as the friend of Lord and Lady Monmouth, remained shaking his head; but as a member of society, who delighted in small scandal, appropriating the gossip with the greatest avidity.

"I should think old Monmouth was not the sort of fellow who would blow up a woman," said Mr. Cassilis.

"Provided she would leave him quietly," said Mr. Melton.

"Yes, Lord Monmouth never could live with a woman more than two years," said Mr. Ormsby, pensively. "And that I thought at the time rather an objection to his marriage."

We must now briefly revert to what befell our hero after those unhappy occurrences in the midst of whose first woe we left him.

The day after the arrival of Mr. Rigby at the Castle, Coningsby quitted it for London; and before a week had elapsed had embarked for Cadiz. He felt a romantic interest in visiting the land to which Edith owed some blood, and in acquiring the language which he had often admired as she spoke it. A favourable opportunity permitted him in the autumn to visit Athens and the Ægean, which he much desired. In the pensive beauties of that delicate land, where perpetual autumn seems to reign, Coningsby found solace. There is something in the character of Grecian scenery which blends with the humour of the melancholy and the feelings of the sorrowful. Coningsby passed his winter at Rome. The wish of his grandfather had rendered it necessary for him to return to England somewhat abruptly. Lord Monmouth had not visited his native country since his marriage; but the period that had elapsed since that event had considerably improved the pros-

spects of his party. The majority of the Whig Cabinet in the House of Commons by 1840 had become little more than nominal; and though it was circulated among their friends, as if from the highest authority that "one was enough," there seemed daily a better chance of their being deprived even of that magical unit. For the first time in the history of this country since the introduction of the system of Parliamentary Sovereignty, the Government of England depended on the fate of single elections. And indeed by a single vote, it is remarkable to observe, the fate of the Whig government was ultimately decided.

This critical state of affairs, duly reported to Lord Monmouth, revived his political passions, and offered him that excitement which he was ever seeking, and yet for which he often had to sigh. The Marquess too was weary of Paris. Every day he found it more difficult to be amused. Lucretia had lost her charm. He, from whom nothing could be concealed, perceived that often while she elaborately attempted to divert him, her mind

was wandering elsewhere. Lord Monmouth was quite superior to all petty jealousy, and the vulgar feelings of inferior mortals; but his sublime selfishness required devotion. He had calculated that a wife or a mistress who might be in love with another man, however powerfully their interests might prompt them, could not be so agreeable and amusing to their friends and husbands, as if they had no such distracting hold upon their hearts or their fancy. Latterly at Paris, while Lucretia became each day more involved in the vortex of society, where all admired, and some adored, her, Lord Monmouth fell into the easy habit of dining in his private rooms, sometimes tête-à-tête with Villebecque, whose inexhaustible tales and adventures about a kind of society which Lord Monmouth had always preferred infinitely to the polished and somewhat insipid circles in which he was born, had rendered him the prime favourite of his great patron. Sometimes Villebecque too brought a friend, male or otherwise, whom he thought invested with the rare faculty of distraction; Lord Monmouth cared not who

or what they were, provided they were diverting.

Villebecque had written to Coningsby at Rome by his grandfather's desire to beg him to return to England and meet Lord Monmouth there. The letter was couched with all the respect and good feeling which Villebecque really entertained for him whom he addressed; still a letter on such a subject from such a person was not agreeable to Coningsby, and his reply to it was direct to his grandfather; Lord Monmouth however had entirely given over writing letters.

Coningsby had met at Paris, on his way to England, Lord and Lady Everingham; and he had returned with them. This revival of an old acquaintance was both agreeable and fortunate for our hero. The vivacity of a clever and charming woman pleasantly disturbed the brooding memory of Coningsby. There is no mortification however keen, no misery however desperate, which the spirit of woman cannot in some degree lighten or alleviate. About too to make his formal entrance into the great world, he could not have secured a more valua-

ble and accomplished female friend. She gave him every instruction, every intimation that was necessary; cleared the social difficulties which in some degree are experienced on their entrance into the world even by the most highly connected, unless they have this benign assistance; planted him immediately in the position which was expedient; took care that he was invited at once to the right houses; and, with the aid of her husband, that he should become a member of the right clubs.

"And who is to have the blue ribbon, Lord Eskdale?" said the Duchess to that nobleman, as he entered and approached to pay his respects.

"If I were Melbourne, I would keep it open," replied his Lordship. "It is a mistake to give away too quickly."

"But suppose they go out?" said her Grace.

"Oh! there is always a last day to clear the house. But they will be in another year. The cliff will not be sapped before then. We made a mistake last year about the ladies."

"I know you always thought so."

"Quarrels about women are always a mistake.

One should make it a rule to give up to them, and then they are sure to give up to us."

"You have no great faith in our firmness?"

"Male firmness is very often obstinacy; women have always something better, worth all qualities; they have tact."

"A compliment to the sex from so finished a critic as Lord Eskdale is appreciated."

But at this moment the arrival of some guests terminated the conversation, and Lord Eskdale moved away, and approached a group which Lady Everingham was enlightening.

"My dear Lord Fitz-booby," her Ladyship observed, "in politics we require faith as well as in all other things."

Lord Fitz-booby looked rather perplexed; but possessed of considerable official experience; having held very high posts, some in the cabinet, for nearly a quarter of a century; he was too versed to acknowledge that he had not understood a single word that had been addressed to him for the last ten minutes. He looked on with the same grave, attentive stolidity, occasionally nodding his head, as he was wont

of yore, when he received a deputation on sugar duties or joint stock banks, and when he made, as was his custom when particularly perplexed, an occasional note on a sheet of foolscap paper.

"An Opposition in an age of Revolution," continued Lady Everingham, "must be founded on principles. It cannot depend on mere personal ability and party address taking advantage of circumstances. You have not enunciated a principle for the last ten years; and when you seemed on the point of acceding to power, it was not on a great question of national interest, but a technical dispute respecting the constitution of an exhausted sugar colony."

"If you are a Conservative party, we wish to know what you want to conserve," said Lord Vere.

"If it had not been for the Whig Abolition of Slavery," said Lord Fitz-booby goaded into repartee, "Jamaica would not have been an exhausted sugar colony."

"Then what you do want to conserve is slavery," said Lord Vere.

"No," said Lord Fitzbooby, "I am never for retracing our steps."

"But will you advance, will you move? And where will you advance, and how will you move?" said Lady Everingham.

"I think we have had quite enough of advancing," said his Lordship. "I had no idea your Ladyship was a member of the Movement party," he added with a sarcastic grin.

"But if it were bad, Lord Fitz-booby to move where we are, as you and your friends have always maintained, how can you reconcile it to principle to remain there?" said Lord Vere.

"I would make the best of a bad bargain," said Lord Fitz-booby. "With a Conservative government, a reformed Constitution would be less dangerous."

"Why?" said Lady Everingham. "What are your distinctive principles that render the peril less?

"I appeal to Lord Eskdale," said Lord Fitz-booby, "there is Lady Everingham turned quite a Radical, I declare. Is not your Lordship of opinion that the country must be safer with a Conservative Government than with a Liberal?"

"I think the country is always tolerably secure," said Lord Eskdale.

Lady Theresa leaning on the arm of Mr. Lyle came up at this moment and unconsciously made a diversion in favour of Lord Fitz-booby.

"Pray, Theresa," said Lady Everingham, "where is Mr. Coningsby?"

Let us endeavour to ascertain. It so happened that on this day Coningsby and Henry Sydney dined at Grillion's, at an University club, where among many friends whom Coningsby had not met for a long time, and among delightful reminiscences, the unconscious hours stole on. It was late when they quitted Grillion's, and Coningsby's brougham was detained for a considerable time before its driver could insinuate himself into the line, which indeed he would never have succeeded in doing, had not he fortunately come across the coachman of the Duke of Agincourt, who being of the same politics as himself, belonging to the same club, and always black-balling the same men, let him in from a legitimate party feeling; so they arrived in Arlington Street at a very late hour.

Coningsby was springing up the staircase, now not so crowded as it had been, and met a retiring party; he was about to say a passing word to a gentleman as he went by, when suddenly Coningsby turned deadly pale. The gentleman could hardly be the cause, for it was the gracious and handsome presence of Lord Beaumanoir; the lady resting on his arm was Edith. They moved on while he was motionless; yet Edith and himself had exchanged glances. His was one of astonishment; but what was the expression of hers? She must have recognised him before he had observed her. She was collected—and she expressed the purpose of her mind in a distant and haughty recognition. Coningsby remained for a moment stupified; then suddenly turning back, he bounded down stairs, and hurried into the cloak room. He met Lady Wallinger; he spoke rapidly, he held her hand, did not listen to her answers, his eye wandering about. There were many persons present, at length he recognised Edith enveloped in her mantle. He went forward, he looked at her, as if he would have

read her soul; he said something. She changed colour as he addressed her; but seemed instantly by an effort to rally and regain her equanimity; replied to his inquiries with extreme brevity, and Lady Wallinger's carriage being announced, moved away with the same slight haughty salute as before, on the arm of Lord Beaumanoir.

CHAPTER II.

SADNESS fell over the once happy family of Millbank after the departure of Coningsby from Hellingsley. When the first pang was over, Edith had found some solace in the sympathy of her aunt, who had always appreciated and admired Coningsby; but it was a sympathy which aspired only to soften sorrow, and not to create hope. But Lady Wallinger, though she lengthened her visit for the sake of her niece, in time quitted them; and then the name of Coningsby was never heard by Edith. Her brother, shortly after the sorrowful and abrupt departure of his friend, had gone to the factories where he remained, and of which in future, it was intended that he should assume the principal direction. Mr. Millbank himself, sustained

at first by the society of his friend Sir Joseph to whom he was attached, and occupied with daily reports from his establishments and the transaction of the affairs of his numerous and busy constituents, was for awhile scarcely conscious of the alteration which had taken place in the demeanour of his daughter. But when they were once more alone together, it was impossible any longer to be blind to the great change. That happy and equable gaiety of spirit, which seemed to spring from an innocent enjoyment of existence, and which had ever distinguished Edith, was wanting. Her sunny glance was gone. She was not indeed always moody and dispirited, but she was fitful, unequal in her tone. That temper whose sweetness had been a domestic proverb, had become a little uncertain. Not that her affection for her father was diminished, but there were snatches of unusual irritability which momentarily escaped her, followed by bursts of tenderness that were the creatures of compunction. And often after some hasty word, she would throw her arms round her father's neck with the fondness of remorse. She pursued her usual avocations, for

she had really too well regulated a mind, she was in truth a woman of too strong an intellect, to neglect any source of occupation and distraction. Her flowers, her pencil, and her books, supplied her with these; and music soothed and at times beguiled her agitated thoughts. But there was no joy in the house, and in time Mr. Millbank felt it.

Mr. Millbank was vexed, irritated, grieved. Edith, his Edith, the pride and delight of his existence, who had been to him only a source of exultation and felicity, was no longer happy, was perhaps pining away; and there was the appearance, the unjust appearance that he, her fond father, was the cause and occasion of all this wretchedness. It would appear that the name of Coningsby to which he now owed a great debt of gratitude was still doomed to bear him mortification and misery. Truly had the young man said that there was a curse upon their two families. And yet on reflection it still seemed to Mr. Millbank that he had acted with as much wisdom and real kindness, as decision. How otherwise was he to have acted? The union was impossible; the speedier their separation therefore, clearly the better. Unfor-

tunate indeed had been his absence from Hellingsley; unquestionably his presence might have prevented the catastrophe. Oswald should have hindered all this. And yet Mr. Millbank could not shut his eyes to the devotion of his son to Coningsby. He felt he could count on no assistance in this respect from that quarter. Yet how hard upon him that he should seem to figure as a despot or a tyrant to his own children whom he loved, when he had absolutely acted in an inevitable manner. Edith seemed sad, Oswald sullen, all was changed. All the objects for which this clear-headed, strong-minded, kind-hearted man had been working all his life, seemed to be frustrated. And why? Because a young man had made love to his daughter, who was really in no manner entitled to do so.

As the autumn drew on, Mr. Millbank found Hellingsley, under existing circumstances, extremely wearisome; and he proposed to his daughter that they should pay a visit to their earlier home. Edith assented without difficulty, but without interest. And yet, as Mr. Millbank immediately perceived, the change was a very judicious one; for certainly the spirits of Edith seemed to improve very soon after her return

to their valley. There were more objects of interest: change too is always beneficial. If Mr. Millbank had been aware that Oswald had received a letter from Coningsby, written before he quitted Spain, perhaps he might have recognised a more satisfactory reason for the transient liveliness of his daughter which had so greatly gratified him.

About a month after Christmas, the meeting of Parliament summoned Mr. Millbank up to London; and he had wished Edith to accompany him. But London in February to Edith, without friends or connexions, her father always occupied and absent from her day and night, seemed to them all on reflection, to be a life not very conducive to health or cheerfulness, and therefore she remained with her brother. Oswald had heard from Coningsby again from Rome; but at the period he wrote he did not anticipate his return to England. His tone was affectionate, but dispirited.

Lady Wallinger went up to London after Easter for the season, and Mr. Millbank, now that there was a constant companion for his daughter, took a house and carried Edith back with him to London. Lady Wallinger who

had great wealth and great tact, had obtained by degrees a not inconsiderable position in society. She had a very fine house in a very fashionable situation, and gave profuse entertainments. The Whigs were under great obligations to her husband, and the great Whig ladies were gratified to find in his wife a polished and pleasing person to whom they could be very courteous without any annoyance. So that Edith, under the auspices of her aunt, found herself at once in circles which otherwise she might not easily have entered, but which her beauty, grace, and experience of the most refined society of the continent qualified her to shine in. One evening they met the Marquess of Beaumanoir, their friend of Rome and Paris, and an admirer of Edith, who from that time was seldom from their side. His mother, the Duchess, immediately called both on the Millbanks and the Wallingers; glad, not only to please her son, but to express that consideration for Mr. Millbank which the Duke always wished to show. It was however of no use: nothing would induce Mr. Millbank ever to enter what he called aristocratic society. He liked the

House of Commons; never paired off; never missed a moment of it; worked at committees all the morning, listencd attentively to debates all the night; always dined at Bellamy's when there was a house; and when there was not, liked dining at the Goldsmith's Company, the Russia Company, great Emigration banquets, and other joint-stock festivities. That was his idea of rational society; business and pleasure combined; a good dinner, and good speeches afterwards.

Edith was aware that Coningsby had returned to England, for her brother had heard from him on his arrival; but Oswald had not heard since. A season in London only represented in the mind of Edith the chance, perhaps the certainty, of meeting Coningsby again; of communing together over the catastrophe of last summer; of soothing and solacing each other's unhappiness, and perhaps, with the sanguine imagination of youth foreseeing a more felicitous future. She had been nearly a fortnight in town, and though moving frequently in the same circles as Coningsby, they had not yet met. It was one of those results which could rarely occur; but

even chance enters too frequently in the league against lovers. The invitation to the assembly at —— House was therefore peculiarly gratifying to Edith, since she could scarcely doubt that if Coningsby were in town, which her casual inquiries of Lord Beaumanoir induced her to believe was the case, that he would be present. Never therefore had she repaired to an assembly with such a fluttering spirit: and yet there was a fascinating anxiety about it that bewilders the young heart.

In vain Edith surveyed the rooms to catch the form of that being, whom for a moment she had never ceased to cherish and muse over. He was not there; and at the very moment when disappointed and mortified she most required solace, she learned from Mr. Melton that Lady Theresa Sydney, whom she chanced to admire, was going to be married, and to Mr. Coningsby.

What a revelation! His silence, perhaps his shunning, of her were no longer inexplicable. What a return for all her romantic devotion in her sad solitude at Hellingsley! Was this the end of their twilight rambles, and the sweet

pathos of their mutual loves! There seemed to be no truth in man, no joy in life! All the feelings that she had so generously lavished, all returned upon herself. She could have burst into a passion of tears and buried herself in a cloister.

Instead of that, civilisation made her listen with a serene though tortured countenance; but as soon as it was in her power, pleading a head-ache to Lady Wallinger, she effected, or thought she had effected her escape from a scene which harrowed her heart.

As for Coningsby, he passed a sleepless night; agitated by the unexpected presence of Edith and distracted by the manner in which she had received him. To say that her appearance had revived all his passionate affection for her would convey an unjust impression of the nature of his feelings. His affection had never for a moment swerved; it was profound and firm. But unquestionably this sudden vision had brought in startling and more vivid colours before him the relations that subsisted between them. There was the being whom he loved and who loved him;

and whatever were the barriers which the circumstances of life placed against their union, they were partakers of the solemn sacrament of an unpolluted heart.

Coningsby as we have mentioned had signified his return to England to Oswald: he had hitherto omitted to write again; not because his spirit faultered, but he was wearied of whispering hope without foundation, and mourning over his chagrined fortunes. Once more in England; once more placed in communication with his grandfather he felt with increased conviction the difficulties which surrounded him. The society of Lady Everingham and her sister who had been at the same time her visitor, had been a relaxation, and a beneficial one to a mind suffering too much from the tension of one idea. But Coningsby had treated the matrimonial project of his gay-minded hostess with the courteous levity in which he believed it had at first half originated. He admired and liked Lady Theresa; but there was a reason why he could not marry her, even had his own heart not been absorbed by one of those passions from which men of deep

and earnest character never emancipate themselves.

After musing and meditating again and again over everything that had occurred, Coningsby fell asleep when the morning had far advanced, resolved to rise when a little refreshed and find out Lady Wallinger, who, he felt sure, would receive him with kindness.

Yet it was fated that this step should not be taken, for while he was at breakfast, his servant brought him a letter from Monmouth House, apprising him that his grandfather wished to see him as soon as possible on urgent business.

CHAPTER III.

LORD MONMOUTH was sitting in the same dressing-room in which he was first introduced to the reader; on the table were several packets of papers that were open and in course of reference; and he dictated his observations to Monsieur Villebecque who was writing at his left hand.

Thus were they occupied, when Coningsby was ushered into the room.

"You see, Harry," said Lord Monmouth, "that I am much occupied to-day, yet the business on which I wish to communicate with you is so pressing that it could not be postponed." He made a sign to Villebecque, and his secretary instantly retired.

"I was right in pressing your return to England," continued Lord Monmouth to his grandson, a little anxious as to the impending communication which he could not in any way anticipate. "These are not times when young men should be out of sight. Your public career will commence immediately. The Government have resolved on a dissolution. My information is from the highest quarter. You may be astonished, but it is a fact. They are going to dissolve their own House of Commons. Notwithstanding this and the Queen's name, we can beat them; but the race requires the finest jockeying. We can't give a point. Tadpole has been here to me about Darlford; he came specially with a message, I may say an appeal, from one to whom I can refuse nothing; the Government count on the seat, though with the new Registration 'tis nearly a tie. If we had a good candidate we could win. But Rigby won't do. He is too much of the old clique; used up; a hack; besides a beaten horse. We are assured the name of Coningsby would be a host; there is a considerable section who support the present fellow, who will not vote

against a Coningsby. They have thought of you as the fit person, and I have approved of the suggestion. You will therefore be the candidate for Darlford with my entire sanction and support, and I have no doubt you will be successful. You may be sure I shall spare nothing: and it will be very gratifying to me, after being robbed of all our boroughs, that the only Coningsby who cares to enter Parliament, should nevertheless be able to do so as early as I could fairly desire."

Coningsby the rival of Mr. Millbank on the hustings of Darlford! Vanquished or victorious, equally a catastrophe! The fierce passions, the gross insults, the hot blood and the cool lies, the ruffianism and the ribaldry, perhaps the domestic discomfiture and mortification, which he was about to be the means of bringing on the roof he loved best in the world, occurred to him with anguish. The countenance of Edith haughty and mournful as last night rose to him again. He saw her canvassing for her father and against him. Madness! And for what was he to make this terrible and costly sacrifice? For his ambition?

Not even for that Divinity or Dæmon for which we all immolate so much! Mighty ambition forsooth to succeed to the Rigbys! To enter the House of Commons a slave and a tool; to move according to instructions, and to labour for the low designs of petty spirits; without even the consolation of being a dupe. What sympathy could there exist between Coningsby and the "great Conservative party," that for ten years in an age of revolution had never promulgated a principle; whose only intelligible and consistent policy seemed to be an attempt, very grateful of course to the feelings of an English Royalist, to revive Irish Puritanism; who when in power in 1835 had used that power only to evince their utter ignorance of Church principles; and who were at this moment, when Coningsby was formally solicited to join their ranks, in open insurrection against the prerogatives of the English Monarchy.

"Do you anticipate then an immediate Dissolution, sir?" inquired Coningsby after a moment's pause.

"We must anticipate it; though I think it doubtful. It may be next month; it may be

in the autumn; they may tide over another year as Lord Eskdale thinks, and his opinion always weighs with me. He is very safe. Tadpole believes they will dissolve at once. But whether they dissolve now, or in a month's time, or in the autumn, or next year, our course is clear. We must declare our intentions immediately. We must hoist our flag. Monday next, there is a great Conservative dinner at Darlford. You must attend it; that will be the finest opportunity in the world for you to announce yourself."

"Don't you think, sir," said Coningsby, "that such an announcement would be rather premature? It is in fact embarking in a contest which may last a year; perhaps more."

"What you say is very true," said Lord Monmouth; "no doubt it is very troublesome; very disgusting; any canvassing is. But we must take things as we find them. You cannot get into Parliament now in the good old gentlemanly way; and we ought to be thankful that this interest has been fostered for our purpose."

Coningsby looked on the carpet, cleared his

throat as if about to speak, and then gave something like a sigh.

"I think you had better be off the day after to-morrow," said Lord Monmouth. "I have sent instructions to the steward to do all he can in so short a time, for I wish you to entertain the principal people."

"You are most kind, you are always most kind to me, dear sir," said Coningsby in a hesitating tone, and with an air of great embarrassment; "but, in truth, I have no wish to enter Parliament."

"What?" said Lord Monmouth.

"I feel that I am not yet sufficiently prepared for so great a responsibility as a seat in the House of Commons," said Coningsby.

"Responsibility!" said Lord Monmouth smiling. "What responsibility is there! How can any one have a more agreeable seat! The only person to whom you are responsible is your own relation, who brings you in. And I don't suppose there can be any difference on any point between us. You are certainly still young; but I was younger by nearly two years when I first went in; and I found no difficulty.

There can be no difficulty. All you have got to do is to vote with your party. As for speaking, if you have a talent that way; take my advice; don't be in a hurry. Learn to know the house; learn the house to know you. If a man be discreet, he cannot enter Parliament too soon."

"It is not exactly that, sir," said Coningsby.

"Then what is it, my dear Harry? You see to-day I have much to do; yet as your business is pressing, I would not postpone seeing you an hour. I thought you would have been very much gratified."

"You mentioned that I had nothing to do but to vote with my party, sir," replied Coningsby. "You mean of course by that term what is understood by the Conservative Party?"

"Of course; our friends."

"I am sorry," said Coningsby, rather pale, but speaking with firmness, "I am sorry that I could not support the Conservative party."

"By —" exclaimed Lord Monmouth, starting in his chair, "some woman has got hold of him, and made him a Whig."

"No, my dear grandfather," said Coningsby,

scarcely able to repress a smile, serious as the interview was becoming, "nothing of the kind, I assure you. No person can be more Anti-Whig."

"I don't know what you are driving at, sir," said Lord Monmouth, in a hard, dry tone.

"I wish to be frank, sir," said Coningsby, "and am very sensible of your goodness in permitting me to speak to you on the subject. What I mean to say is, that I have for a long time looked upon the Conservative party as a body who have betrayed their trust; more from ignorance I admit than from design; yet clearly a body of individuals totally unequal to the exigencies of the epoch; and indeed unconscious of its real character."

"You mean giving up those Irish corporations?" said Lord Monmouth. "Well, between ourselves, I am quite of the same opinion. But we must mount higher; we must go to —28 for the real mischief. But what is the use of lamenting the past? Peel is the only man; suited to the times and all that,—at least we must say so, and try to believe so; we can't go back. And it is our own fault that we have

let the chief power out of the hands of our own order. It was never thought of in the time of your great-grandfather, sir. And if a Commoner were for a season permitted to be the nominal Premier to do the detail, there was always a secret Committee of great 1688 Nobles to give him his instructions."

"I should be very sorry to see secret Committees of great 1688 Nobles again," said Coningsby.

"Then what the devil do you want to see?" said Lord Monmouth.

"Political Faith," said Coningsby, "instead of Political Infidelity."

"Hem!" said Lord Monmouth.

"Before I support Conservative principles," continued Coningsby, "I merely wish to be informed what those principles aim to conserve. It would not appear to be the Prerogative of the Crown, since the principal portion of a Conservative oration now is an invective against a late royal act which they describe as a Bed-chamber plot. Is it the Church which they wish to conserve? What is a threatened Appropriation Clause against an actual Church Commission in

the hands of Parliamentary Laymen? Could the Long Parliament have done worse? Well then, if it's neither the Crown nor the Church whose rights and privileges this Conservative party propose to vindicate, is it your House, the House of Lords, whose powers they are prepared to uphold? Is it not notorious that the very man whom you have elected as your leader in that House, declares among his Conservative adherents, that henceforth the very Assembly that used to furnish those Committees of great Revolution Nobles that you mention, is to initiate nothing; and without a struggle is to subside into that undisturbed repose which resembles the Imperial tranquillity that secured the frontiers by paying tribute."

"All this is vastly fine," said Lord Monmouth; "but I see no means by which I can attain my object but by supporting Peel. After all, what is the end of all parties and all politics? To gain your object. I want to turn our coronet into a Ducal one, and to get your grandmother's barony called out of abeyance in your favour. It is impossible that Peel can refuse me. I have already purchased

an ample estate with the view of entailing it on you and your issue. You will make a conderable alliance; you may marry if you please Lady Theresa Sydney. I hear the report with pleasure. Count on my at once entering into any arrangement conducive to your happiness."

"My dear grandfather, you have ever been to me only too kind and generous."

"To whom should I be kind but to you; my own blood that has never crossed me, and of whom I have reason to be proud. Yes, Harry, it gratifies me to hear you admired and learn your success. All I want now is to see you in Parliament. A man should be in Parliament early. There is a sort of stiffness about every man, no matter what may be his talents, who enters Parliament late in life; and now fortunately the occasion offers. You will go down on Friday; feed the notabilities well; speak out; praise Peel; abuse O'Connell and the ladies of the Bed-chamber; anathematise all waverers; say a good deal about Ireland; stick to the Irish Registration Bill, that's a good card; and above all, my dear Harry, don't spare that fellow Millbank. Remember in turn-

ing him out you not only gain a vote for the Conservative Cause and our coronet, but you crush my foe. Spare nothing for that object; I count on you, boy."

"I should grieve to be backward in anything that concerned your interest or your honour, sir," said Coningsby with an air of great embarrassment.

"I am sure you would, I am sure you would," said Lord Monmouth, in a tone of some kindness.

"And I feel at this moment," continued Coningsby, "that there is no personal sacrifice which I am not prepared to make for them, except one. My interests, my affections, they should not be placed in the balance, if yours, sir, were at stake, though there are circumstances which might involve me in a position of as much mental distress as a man could well endure; but I claim for my convictions, my dear grandfather, a generous tolerance."

"I can't follow you, sir," said Lord Monmouth again in his hard tone. "Our interests are inseparable, and therefore there can never be any sacrifice of conduct on your part. What

you mean by sacrifice of affections I don't comprehend; but as for your opinions, you have no business to have any other than those I uphold. You are too young to form opinions."

"I am sure I wish to express them with no unbecoming confidence;" replied Coningsby; "I have never intruded them on your ear before; but this being an occasion, when you yourself said, sir, I was about to commence my public career, I confess I thought it was my duty to be frank; I would not entail on myself long years of mortification by one of those ill-considered entrances into political life which so many public men have cause to deplore."

"You go with your family, sir, like a gentleman; you are not to consider your opinions like a philosopher or a political adventurer."

"Yes, sir," said Coningsby with animation, "but men going with their families, like gentlemen, and losing sight of every principle on which the society of this country ought to be established, produced the Reform Bill."

"D—— the Reform Bill;" said Lord Monmouth, "if the Duke had not quarrelled with Lord Grey on a Coal Committee, we should

never have had the Reform Bill. And Grey would have gone to Ireland."

"You are in as great peril now as you were in 1830," said Coningsby.

"No, no, no;" said Lord Monmouth, "the Tory party is organized now; they will not catch us napping again; these Conservative Associations have done the business."

"But what are they organized for?" said Coningsby. "At the best to turn out the Whigs. And when you have turned out the Whigs, what then? You may get your Ducal Coronet, sir. But a Duke now is not as great a man as a Baron was but a century back. We cannot struggle against the irresistible stream of circumstances. Power has left our order; this is not an age for factitious aristocracy. As for my grandmother's barony, I should look upon the termination of its abeyance in my favour, as the act of my political extinction. What we want, sir, is not to fashion new Dukes and furbish up old Baronies; but to establish great principles which may maintain the realm and secure the happiness of the People. Let me see Authority once more honoured; a solemn Reverence again

the habit of our lives; let me see Property acknowledging as in the old days of faith, that Labour is his twin brother, and that the essence of all tenure is the performance of duty; let results such as these be brought about, and let me participate, however feebly, in the great fulfilment; and public life then indeed becomes a noble career, and a seat in Parliament an enviable distinction."

"I tell you what it is, Harry," said Lord Monmouth, very drily, "members of this family may think as they like, but they must act as I please. You must go down on Friday to Darlford and declare yourself a candidate for the town, or I shall re-consider our mutual positions. I would say, you must go to-morrow; but it is but courteous to Rigby to give him a previous intimation of your movement. And that cannot be done to-day. I sent for Rigby this morning on other business which now occupies me; and find he is out of town. He will return to-morrow; and will be here at three o'clock, when you can meet him. You will meet him I doubt not like a man of sense," added Lord Monmouth, looking at Coningsby with a glance

such as he had never before encountered, "who is not prepared to sacrifice all the objects of life, for the pursuit of some fantastical puerilities."

His Lordship rang a bell on his table for Villebecque, and to prevent any further conversation, resumed his papers.

CHAPTER IV.

It would have been difficult for any person, unconscious of crime, to have felt more dejected than Coningsby, when he rode out of the court-yard of Monmouth House. The love of Edith would have consoled him for the destruction of his prosperity; the proud fulfilment of his ambition might in time have proved some compensation for his crushed affections; but his present position seemed to offer no single source of solace. There came over him that irresistible conviction, that is at times the dark doom of all of us, that the bright period of our life is past; that a future awaits us only of anxiety, failure, mortification, despair; that none of our

resplendent visions can be ever realized, and that we add but one more victim to the long and dreary catalogue of baffled aspirations.

Nor could he indeed by any combination see the means to extricate himself from the perils that were encompassing him. There was something about his grandfather that defied persuasion. Prone as eloquent youth generally is to believe in the resistless power of its appeals, Coningsby despaired at once of ever moving Lord Monmouth. There had been a callous dryness in his manner, an unswerving purpose in his spirit, that at once baffled all attempts at influence. Nor could Coningsby forget the glance he received when he quitted the room. There was no possibility of mistaking it; it said at once, without periphrasis, "Cross my purpose, and I will crush you."

This was the moment when the sympathy, if not the councils, of friendship might have been grateful. A clever woman might have afforded even more than sympathy; some happy device that might have even released him from the mesh in which he was involved. And once Coningsby had turned his horse's head to Park

Lane to call on Lady Everingham. But surely if there were a sacred secret in the world, it was the one which subsisted between himself and Edith. No, that must never be violated. Then there was Lady Wallinger; he could at least speak with freedom to her. He resolved to tell her all. He looked in for a moment at a Club to take up the Court Guide and find her direction. A few men were standing in a bow window. He heard Mr. Cassilis say,

"So Beau they say is booked at last; the new beauty, have you heard?"

"I saw him very sweet on her last night," rejoined his companion. "Has she any tin?"

"Deuced deal they say," replied Mr. Cassilis. "The father's a Cotton Lord, and they all have loads of tin, you know. Nothing like them now."

"He is in Parliament, is not he?"

"'Gad I believe he is," said Mr. Cassilis, "I never know who is in Parliament in these days. I remember when there were only ten men in the House of Commons who were not either members of Brookes' or this place. Everything is so deuced changed."

"I hear 'tis an old affair of Beau," said another gentleman. "It was all done a year ago at Rome or Paris."

"They say she refused him then," said Mr. Cassilis.

"Well, that is tolerably cool for a manufacturer's daughter," said his friend, "what next?"

"I wonder how the Duke likes it," said Mr. Cassilis.

"Or the Duchess?" added one of his friends.

"Or the Everinghams?" added the other.

"The Duke will be deuced glad to see Beau settled, I take it," said Mr. Cassilis.

"A good deal depends on the tin," said his friend.

Coningsby threw down the Court Guide with a sinking heart. In spite of every insuperable difficulty, hitherto the end and object of all his aspirations and all his exploits, sometimes even almost unconsciously to himself, was to be Edith. It was over. The strange manner of last night was fatally explained. The heart that once had been his was now anothers. To the man who still loves there is in that conviction the most profound and desolate sorrow of which our

nature is capable. All the recollections of the past, all the once cherished prospects of the future, blend into one bewildering anguish. Coningsby quitted the Club, and mounting his horse, rode rapidly out of town, almost unconscious of his direction. He found himself at length in a green lane near Willesden, silent and undisturbed; he pulled up his horse and he summoned all his mind to the contemplation of his prospects.

Edith was lost. Now, should he return to his grandfather, accept his mission, and go down to Darlford on Friday? Favour and fortune, power, prosperity, rank, distinction would be the consequence of this step. Might not he add even vengeance? Was there to be no term to his endurance? Might not he teach this proud prejudiced manufacturer, with all his virulence and despotic caprices, a memorable lesson? And his daughter too, this betrothed after all of a young noble, with her flush futurity of splendour and enjoyment, was she to hear of him only, if indeed she heard of him at all, as of one toiling or trifling in the humbler positions of existence; and wonder with a blush

that he ever could have been the hero of her romantic girlhood! What degradation in the idea! His cheek burnt at the possibility of such ignominy!

It was a conjuncture in his life that required decision. He thought of his companions who looked up to him with such ardent anticipations of his fame, of delight in his career, and confidence in his leading; were all these high and fond fancies to be baulked? On the very threshold of life was he to blunder? 'Tis the first step that leads to all; and his was to be a wilful error. He remembered his first visit to his grandfather, and the delight of his friends at Eton at his report on his return. After eight years of initiation, was he to lose that favour then so highly prized, when the results which they had so long counted on, were on the very eve of accomplishment. Parliament and riches, and rank, and power—these were facts, realities, substances that none could mistake. Was he to sacrifice them for speculations, theories, shadows, perhaps the vapours of a green and conceited brain? No, by Heaven no; he was like Cæsar by the starry river's side,

watching the image of the planets on its fatal waters. The die was cast.

The sun set; the twilight spell fell upon his soul; the exaltation of his spirit died away. Beautiful thoughts, full of sweetness and tranquillity and consolation, came clustering round his heart like seraphs. He thought of Edith in her hours of fondness; he thought of the pure and solemn moments when to mingle his name with the heroes of humanity was his aspiration, and to achieve immortal fame the inspiring purpose of his life. What were the tawdry accidents of vulgar ambition to him! No domestic despot could deprive him of his intellect, his knowledge, the sustaining power of an unpolluted conscience. If he possessed the intelligence in which he had confidence, the world would recognise his voice, even if not placed upon a pedestal. If the principles of his philosophy were true, the great heart of the nation would respond to their expression. Coningsby felt at this moment a profound conviction which never again deserted him, that the conduct which would violate the affections of the heart or the dictates of the conscience, however it may lead

to immediate success, is a fatal error. Conscious that he was perhaps verging on some painful vicissitudes of his life, he devoted himself to a love that seemed hopeless, and to a fame that was perhaps a dream.

It was under the influence of these solemn resolutions, that he wrote on his return home, a letter to Lord Monmouth, in which he expressed all that affection, which he really felt for his grandfather, and all the pangs which it cost him to adhere to the conclusions he had already announced. In terms of tenderness and even humility he declined to become a candidate for Darlford, or even to enter Parliament except as the master of his own conduct.

CHAPTER V.

Lady Monmouth was reclining on a sofa in that beautiful boudoir which had been fitted up under the superintendance of Mr. Rigby, but as he then believed for the Princess Colonna. The walls were hung with amber satin, painted by Laroche with such subjects as might be expected from his brilliant and picturesque pencil. Fair forms, heroes and heroines in dazzling costume, the offspring of chivalry merging into what is commonly styled civilisation, moved in graceful or fantastic groups amid palaces and gardens. The ceiling carved in the deep honeycomb fashion of the Saracens was richly gilt and picked out in violet. Upon a violet

carpet of velvet was represented the marriage of Cupid and Psyche.

It was about two hours after Coningsby had quitted Monmouth House, and Flora came in, sent for by Lady Monmouth, as was her custom to read to her as she was employed with some light work.

"'Tis a new book of Sue," said Lucretia. "they say it is good."

Flora seated by her side read for about a quarter of an hour. Reading was an accomplishment which distinguished Flora; but to-day her voice faultered, her expression was uncertain; she seemed but very imperfectly to comprehend her page. More than once Lady Monmouth looked round at her with an inquisitive glance. Suddenly Flora stopped and burst into tears.

"Oh! madam," she at last exclaimed, "if you would but speak to Mr. Coningsby all might be right!"

"What is this?" said Lady Monmouth, turning quickly on the sofa, then collecting herself in an instant she continued with less abruptness and with more suavity than usual, "tell me, Flora, what is it; what is the matter?"

"My Lord," sobbed Flora, "has quarrelled with Mr. Coningsby."

An expression of eager interest came over the countenance of Lucretia.

"Why have they quarrelled?"

"I do not know they have quarrelled; it is not perhaps a right term; but my Lord is very angry with Mr. Coningsby."

"Not very angry I should think, Flora; and about what?"

"Oh! very angry, madam," said Flora, shaking her head mournfully, "my Lord told M. Villebecque that perhaps Mr. Coningsby would never enter the house again."

"Was it to-day!" asked Lucretia.

"This morning; Mr. Coningsby has only left this hour or two. He will not do what my Lord wishes—about some seat in the Chamber. I do not know exactly what it is; but my Lord is in one of his moods of terror; my father is frightened even to go into his room, when he is so."

"Has Mr. Rigby been here to-day?" asked Lucretia.

"Mr. Rigby is not in town. My father went

for Mr. Rigby this morning before Mr. Coningsby came, and he found that Mr. Rigby was not in town. That is why I know it."

Lady Monmouth rose from her sofa and walked once or twice up and down the room. Then turning to Flora, she said, "Go away now; the book is stupid; it does not amuse me. Stop: find out all you can for me about the quarrel, before I speak to Mr. Coningsby."

Flora quitted the room. Lucretia remained for some time in meditation: then she wrote a few lines which she despatched at once to Mr. Rigby.

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT a great man was the Right Honourable Nicholas Rigby! Here was one of the first peers of England, and one of the finest ladies in London, both waiting with equal anxiety his return to town; and unable to transact two affairs of vast importance yet wholly unconnected, without his interposition! What was the secret of the influence of this man, confided in by every body, trusted by none? His councils were not deep, his expedients were not felicitous; he had no feeling, and he could create no sympathy. It is that in most of the transactions of life there is some portion which no one cares to accomplish, and which everybody wishes to be

achieved. This was always the portion of Mr. Rigby. In the eye of the world he had constantly the appearance of being mixed up with high dealings, and negotiations and arrangements of fine management; where—as in truth, notwithstanding his splendid livery and the airs he gave himself in the servants' hall, his real business in life had ever been—to do the dirty work.

Mr. Rigby had been shut up much at his villa of late. He was concocting, you could not term it composing, an article, a "very slashing article," which was to prove that the Penny postage must be the destruction of the Aristocracy. It was a grand subject treated in his highest style. His parallel portraits of Rowland Hill, the Conqueror of Almarez, and Rowland Hill the devisor of the cheap postage, was enormously fine. It was full of passages in italics; little words in great capitals; and almost drew tears. The statistical details also were highly interesting and novel. Several of the old postmen, both twopenny and general, who had been in office with himself, and who were inspired with an equal zeal

against that spirit of Reform of which they had alike been victims, supplied him with information which nothing but a breach of ministerial duty could have furnished. The prophetic peroration as to the irresistible progress of Democracy was almost as powerful as one of Rigby's speeches on Aldborough or Amersham. There never was a fellow for giving a good hearty kick to the people like Rigby. Himself sprung from the dregs of the populace, this was disinterested. What could be more patriotic and magnanimous than his Jeremiads over the fall of the Montmorencis and the Crillons, or the possible catastrophe of the Percys and the Manners! The truth of all this hullaballoo was that Rigby had a sly pension which, by an inevitable association of ideas, he always connected with the maintenance of an Aristocracy. All his rigmarole dissertations on the French Revolution were impelled by this secret influence; and when he wailed over "la guerre aux châteaux," and moaned like a mandrake over Nottingham Castle in flames, the rogue had an eye all the while to Quarter Day!

Arriving in town, the day after Coningsby's

interview with his grandfather, Mr. Rigby found a summons to Monmouth House waiting him, and an urgent note from Lucretia begging that he would permit nothing to prevent him seeing her for a few minutes before he called on the Marquess.

Lucretia, acting on the unconscious intimation of Flora, had in the course of four-and-twenty hours obtained pretty ample and accurate details of the cause of contention between Coningsby and her husband. She could inform Mr. Rigby not only that Lord Monmouth was highly incensed against his grandson; but that the cause of their misunderstanding arose about a seat in the House of Commons, and that seat too the one which Rigby had long appropriated to himself, and over whose registration he had watched with such affectionate solicitude. Lady Monmouth arranged this information like a first-rate artist; and gave it a grouping and a colour, which produced the liveliest effect upon her confederate. The countenance of Rigby was almost ghastly as he received the intelligence; a grin, half of malice, half of terror, played over his features.

"I told you to beware of him long ago," said Lady Monmouth. "He is, he has ever been, in the way of both of us."

"He is in my power," said Rigby; "we can crush him."

"How?"

"He is in love with the daughter of Millbank, the man who bought Hellingsley."

"Hah!" exclaimed Lady Monmouth in a prolonged tone.

"He was at Coningsby all last summer hanging about her. I found the younger Millbank quite domiciliated at the Castle; a fact of itself which, if known to Lord Monmouth, would ensure the lad's annihilation."

"And you kept this fine news for a winter campaign, my good Mr. Rigby," said Lady Monmouth with a subtile smile. "It was a weapon of service; I give you my compliments."

"The time is not always ripe," said Mr. Rigby.

"But it is now most mature; let us not conceal it from ourselves, that since his first visit to Coningsby, we have neither of us really been

in the same position which we then occupied, or believed we should occupy. My Lord, though you would scarcely believe it, has a weakness for this boy; and though I by my marriage, and you by your zealous ability, have apparently secured a permanent hold upon his habits, I have never doubted that when the crisis comes we shall find that the golden fruit is plucked by one who has not watched the garden. You take me? There is no reason why we two should clash together; we can both of us find what we want; and more securely if we work in company."

"I trust my devotion to you has never been doubted, dear Madam."

"Nor to yourself, dear Mr. Rigby. Go now; the game is before you. Rid me of this Coningsby, and I will secure you all that you want. Doubt not me. There is no reason. I want a firm ally. There must be two."

"It shall be done," said Rigby, "it must be done. If once the notion gets wind that one of the Castle family may perchance stand for Darlford, all the present combinations will be disor-

ganized. It must be done at once; I know that the government will dissolve."

"So I hear for certain," said Lucretia. "Be sure there is no time to lose. What does he want with you to-day?"

"I know not; there are so many things."

"To be sure: and yet I cannot doubt he will speak of this quarrel. Let not the occasion be lost. Whatever his mood, the subject may be introduced. If good, you will guide him more easily; if dark, the love for the Hellingsley girl, the fact of the brother being in his Castle, drinking his wine, riding his horses, ordering about his servants, you will omit no details—a Millbank quite at home at Coningsby will lash him to madness! 'Tis quite ripe. Not a word that you have seen me. Go, go, or he may hear that you have arrived. I shall be at home all the morning. It will be but gallant, that you should pay me a little visit when you have transacted your business. You understand—au revoir!"

Lady Monmouth took up again her French novel; but her eye soon glanced over the page, unattached by its contents. Her own existence

was too interesting to find any excitement in fiction. It was nearly three years since her marriage; that great step which she ever had a conviction was to lead to results still greater. Of late she had often been filled with a presentiment that they were near at hand; never more so than on this day. Irresistible was the current of associations that led her to meditate on freedom, wealth, power, on a career which should at the same time dazzle the imagination and gratify her heart. Notwithstanding the gossip of Paris, founded on no authentic knowledge of her husband's character or information, based on the hap-hazard observations of the floating multitude, Lucretia herself had no reason to fear that her influence over Lord Monmouth if exerted was materially diminished. But satisfied that he had formed no other tie, with her ever the test of her position, she had not thought it expedient, and certainly would have found it irksome, to maintain that influence by any ostentatious means. She knew that Lord Monmouth was capricious, easily wearied, soon palled; and that on men who have no affections, affection has no hold. Their passions or their fancies

on the contrary, as it seemed to her, are rather stimulated by neglect or indifference, provided they are not systematic; and the circumstance of a wife being admired by one, who is not her husband, sometimes wonderfully revives the passion or renovates the respect of him, who should be devoted to her.

The health of Lord Monmouth was the subject which never was long absent from the vigilance or meditation of Lucretia. She was well assured that his life was no longer secure. She knew that after their marriage, he had made a will which secured to her a very large portion of his great wealth, in case of their having no issue, and after the accident at Paris all hope in that respect was over. Recently the extreme anxiety which Lord Monmouth had evinced about terminating the abeyance of the barony to which his first wife was a co-heiress in favour of his grandson, had alarmed Lucretia. To establish in the land another branch of the House of Coningsby was evidently the last excitement of Lord Monmouth, and perhaps a permanent one. If the idea were once accepted, notwithstanding the limit to its endowment

which Lord Monmouth might, at the first start, contemplate, Lucretia had sufficiently studied his temperament to be convinced that all his energies and all his resources would ultimately be devoted to its practical fulfilment. Her original prejudice against Coningsby and jealousy of his influence had therefore of late been considerably aggravated; and the intelligence that for the first time there was a misunderstanding between Coningsby and her husband filled her with excitement and hope. She knew her Lord well enough to feel assured that the cause for the displeasure in the present instance could not be a light one, she resolved instantly to labour that it should not be transient; and it so happened that she had applied for aid in this endeavour to the very individual in whose power it rested to accomplish all her desire while in doing so he felt at the same time he was defending his own position and advancing his own interests.

Lady Monmouth was now awaiting with some excitement the return of Mr. Rigby. His interview with his patron was of unusual length. An hour, and more than an hour, had elapsed.

Lady Monmouth again threw aside the book which more than once she had discarded. She paced the room; restless rather than disquieted. She had complete confidence in Rigby's ability for the occasion; and with her knowledge of Lord Monmouth's character, she could not contemplate the possibility of failure, if the circumstances were adroitly introduced to his consideration. Still time stole on; the harassing and exhausting process of suspense was acting on her nervous system. She began to think that Rigby had not found the occasion favourable for the catastrophe; that Lord Monmouth from apprehension of disturbing Rigby and entailing explanations on himself had avoided the necessary communication; that her skilful combination for the moment had missed. Two hours had now elapsed, and Lucretia, in a state of considerable irritation was about to inquire whether Mr. Rigby were with his Lordship, when the door of her boudoir opened, and that gentleman appeared.

"How long you have been," exclaimed Lady Monmouth. "Now sit down and tell me what has past."

Lady Monmouth pointed to the seat which Flora had occupied.

"I thank your Ladyship," said Mr. Rigby with a somewhat grave and yet perplexed expression of countenance, and seating himself at some little distance from his companion, "but I am very well here."

There was a pause. Instead of responding to the invitation of Lady Monmouth to communicate, with his usual readiness and volubility, Mr. Rigby was silent, and if it were possible to use such an expression with regard to such a gentleman, apparently embarrassed.

"Well," said Lady Monmouth. "Does he know about the Millbanks?"

"Everything," said Mr. Rigby.

"And what did he say?"

"His Lordship was greatly shocked," replied Mr. Rigby with a pious expression of features. "Such monstrous ingratitude! As his Lordship very justly observed, it is impossible to say what is going on under my own roof, or to whom I can trust."

"But he made an exception in your favour, I

dare say, my dear Mr. Rigby," said Lady Monmouth.

"Lord Monmouth was pleased to say that I possessed his entire confidence," said Mr. Rigby, "and that he looked to me in his difficulties."

"Very sensible of him. And what is to become of Mr. Coningsby?"

"The steps which his Lordship is about to take with reference to his establishment generally," said Mr. Rigby, "will allow the connection that at present subsists between that gentleman and his noble relative, now that Lord Monmouth's eyes are open to his real character, to terminate naturally without the necessity of any formal explanation."

"But what do you mean by the steps he is going to take in his establishment generally?"

"Lord Monmouth thinks he requires change of scene."

"Oh! is he going to drag me abroad again," exclaimed Lady Monmouth with great impatience.

"Why not exactly," said Mr. Rigby rather demurely.

"I hope he is not going again to that dreadful Castle in Lancashire."

"Lord Monmouth was thinking that as you were tired of Paris, you might find some of the German Baths agreeable."

"Why there is nothing that Lord Monmouth dislikes so much as a German bathing place!"

"Exactly," said Mr. Rigby.

"Then how capricious in him, wanting to go to them!"

"He does not want to go to them."

"What do you mean, Mr. Rigby," said Lady Monmouth in a lower voice, and looking him full in the face with a glance seldom bestowed.

There was a churlish and unusual look about Rigby. It was as if malignant, and yet at the same time a little frightened, he had screwed himself into doggedness.

"I mean what Lord Monmouth means; he suggests that if your Ladyship were to pass the summer at Kissingen for example, and a paragraph in the Morning Post were to announce that his Lordship was about to join you there, all awkwardness would be removed; and no one

could for a moment take the liberty of supposing, even if his Lordship did not ultimately reach you, that anything like a separation had occurred."

"A separation!" said Lady Monmouth.

"Quite amicable," said Mr. Rigby. "I would never have consented to interfere in the affair, but to secure that most desirable point."

"I will see Lord Monmouth at once," said Lucretia rising, her natural pallor aggravated into a ghoul-like tint.

"His Lordship has gone out," said Mr. Rigby rather stubbornly.

"Our conversation, sir, then finishes: I wait his return." She bowed haughtily.

"His Lordship will never return to Monmouth House again."

Lucretia sprang from the sofa.

"Miserable craven!" she exclaimed, "has the cowardly tyrant fled? And he really thinks that I am to be crushed by such an instrument as this! Pah! He may leave Monmouth House, but I shall not. Begone, sir."

"Still anxious to secure an amicable separa-

tion," said Mr. Rigby, "your Ladyship must allow me to place the circumstances of the case fairly before your excellent judgment. Lord Monmouth has decided upon a course; you know as well as me that he never swerves from his resolutions. He has left peremptory instructions, and he will listen to no appeal. He has empowered me to represent to your Ladyship that he wishes in every way to consider your convenience. He suggests that everything in short should be arranged as if his Lordship were himself unhappily no more; that your Ladyship should at once enter into your jointure, which shall be made payable quarterly to your order, provided you can find it convenient to live upon the continent," added Mr. Rigby with some hesitation.

"And suppose I cannot?"

"Why then we will leave your Ladyship to the assertion of your rights."

"We!"

"I beg your Ladyship's pardon: I speak as the friend of the family; the trustee of your marriage settlement; well-known also as Lord Monmouth's executor," said Mr. Rigby, his

countenance gradually regaining its usual callous confidence, and some degree of self-complacency, as he remembered the good things which he enumerated.

"I have decided," said Lady Monmouth; "I will assert my rights. Your master has mistaken my character and his own position. He shall rue the day that he assailed me."

"I should be sorry if there were any violence," said Mr. Rigby, "especially as everything is left to my management and control. An office indeed which I only accepted for your mutual advantage. I think upon reflection I might put before your Ladyship some considerations which might induce you on the whole to be of opinion that it will be better for us to draw together in this business, as we have hitherto indeed throughout an acquaintance, now of some years." Rigby was resuming all his usual tone of brazen familiarity.

"Your self-confidence exceeds even Lord Monmouth's estimate of it," said Lucretia.

"Now, now, you are unkind. Your Ladyship mistakes my position. I am interfering in this business for your sake. I might have refused

the office. It would have fallen to another, who would have fulfilled it without any delicacy and consideration for your feelings. View my interposition in that light, my dear Lady Monmouth, and circumstances will assume altogether a new colour."

"I beg that you would quit the house, sir."

Mr. Rigby shook his head. "I would with pleasure to oblige you, were it in my power, but Lord Monmouth has particularly desired that I should take up my residence here permanently. The servants are now my servants. It is useless to ring the bell. For your Ladyship's sake, I wish everything to be accomplished with tranquillity, and if possible friendliness and good-feeling. You can have even a week for the preparations for your departure if necessary. I will take that upon myself. Any carriages too that you desire; your jewels; at least all those that are not at the banker's. The arrangement about your jointure, your letters of credit, even your passport, I will attend to myself; only too happy if by this painful interference, I have in any way contributed to soften the annoyance which at the first blush

you may naturally experience, but which like everything else, take my word, will wear off."

"I shall send for Lord Eskdale," said Lady Monmouth, "he is a gentleman."

"I am quite sure," said Mr. Rigby, "that Lord Eskdale will give you the same advice as myself, if he only reads your Ladyship's letters," he added slowly, "to Prince Trautsmandorff."

"My letters!" said Lady Monmouth.

"Pardon me," said Rigby, putting his hand in his pockets as if to guard some treasure, "I have no wish to revive painful associations; but I have them; and I must act upon them, if you persist in treating me as a foe, who am in reality your best friend, which indeed I ought to be, having the honour of acting as trustee under your marriage settlement, and having known you so many years."

"Leave me for the present alone," said Lady Monmouth. "Send me my servant if I have one. I shall not remain here the week which you mention, but quit at once this house, which I wish I had never entered. Adieu! Mr. Rigby, you are now Lord of Monmouth House,

and yet I cannot help feeling you too will be discharged before he dies."

Mr. Rigby made Lady Monmouth a bow such as became the master of the house, and then withdrew.

CHAPTER VII.

A paragraph in the Morning Post a few days after his interview with his grandfather, announcing that Lord and Lady Monmouth had quitted town for the Baths of Kissingen, startled Coningsby, who called the same day at Monmouth House in consequence. There he learnt more authentic details of their unexpected movements. It appeared that Lady Monmouth had certainly departed; and the porter with a rather sceptical visage informed Coningsby that Lord Monmouth was to follow; but when he could not tell. At present his Lordship was at Brighton, and in a few days was about to take possession of a villa at Richmond which

had for some time been fitting up for him under the superintendence of Mr. Rigby, who, as Coningsby also learnt, now permanently resided at Monmouth House. All this intelligence made Coningsby ponder. He was sufficiently acquainted with the parties concerned to feel assured that he had not learnt the whole truth. What had really taken place, and what was the real cause of the occurrences, were equally mystical to him: all he was convinced of was, that some great domestic revolution had been suddenly effected.

Coningsby entertained for his grandfather a sincere affection. With the exception of their last unfortunate interview, he had experienced from Lord Monmouth nothing but kindness both in phrase and deed. There was also something in Lord Monmouth, when he pleased it, rather fascinating to young men; and as Coningsby had never occasioned him any feelings but pleasurable ones, he was always disposed to make himself delightful to his grandson. The experience of a consummate man of the world advanced in life, detailed without rigidity to youth, with frankness and

facility, is bewitching. Lord Monmouth was never garrulous: he was always pithy and could be picturesque. He revealed a character in a sentence; and detected the ruling passion with the hand of a master. Besides he had seen everybody and had done everything; and though on the whole too indolent for conversation, and loving to be talked to, these were circumstances which made his too rare communications the more precious.

With these feelings Coningsby resolved the moment that he learned that his grandfather was established at Richmond to pay him a visit. He was informed that Lord Monmouth was at home, and he was shown into a drawing-room, where he found two French ladies in their bonnets, who he soon discovered to be actresses. They also had come down to pay a visit to his grandfather, and were by no means displeased to pass the interval that was to elapse before they had that pleasure, in chatting with his grandson. Coningsby found them extremely amusing; with the finest spirits in the world, imperturbable good temper, and an unconscious practical philosophy, that defied

the devil Care and all his works. And well it was, that he found such agreeable companions, for time flowed on, and no summons arrived to call him to his grandfather's presence, and no herald to announce his grandfather's advent. The ladies and Coningsby had exhausted badinage; they had examined and criticised all the furniture; had rifled the vases of their prettiest flowers; and Clotilde who had already sung several times, was proposing a duet to Ermengarde, when a servant entered, and told the ladies that a carriage was in attendance to give them an airing, and after that Lord Monmouth hoped they would return and dine with him; then turning to Coningsby he informed him with his Lord's compliments, that Lord Monmouth was sorry he was too much engaged to see him.

Nothing was to be done but to put a tolerably good face upon it. "Embrace Lord Monmouth for me," said Coningsby to his fair friends, "and tell him I think it very unkind that he did not ask me to dinner with you."

Coningsby said this with a gay air, but really

with a depressed spirit. He felt convinced that his grandfather was deeply displeased with him, and as he rode away from the villa, he could not resist the strong impression that he was destined never to enter it. Yet it was decreed otherwise. It so happened that the idle message which Coningsby had left for his grandfather, and which he never seriously supposed for a moment that his late companions would have given their host, operated entirely in his favour. Whatever were the feelings with respect to Coningsby at the bottom of Lord Monmouth's heart, he was actuated in his refusal to see him not more from displeasure, than from an anticipatory horror of something like a scene. Even a surrender from Coningsby without terms, and an offer to declare himself a candidate for Darlford, or to do anything else that his grandfather wished, would have been disagreeable to Lord Monmouth in his present mood. As in politics a revolution is often followed by a season of torpor, so in the case of Lord Monmouth, the separation from his wife, which had for a long period occupied his meditation, was succeeded by a vein of mental dissi-

pation. He did not wish to be reminded by anything or any person that he had still in some degree the misfortune of being a responsible member of society. He wanted to be surrounded by individuals who were above or below the conventional interests of what is called "the World." He wanted to hear nothing of those painful and embarrassing influences which from our contracted experience and want of enlightenment, we magnify into such undue importance. For this purpose he wished to have about him persons whose knowledge of the cares of life concerned only the means of existence; and whose sense of its objects referred only to the sources of enjoyment; persons who had not been educated in the idolatry of Respectability; that is to say, of realizing such an amount of what is termed Character by a hypocritical deference to the prejudices of the community, as may enable them at suitable times, and under convenient circumstances and disguises, to plunder the Public. This was the Monmouth Philosophy.

With these feelings, Lord Monmouth recoiled at this moment from grandsons and relations

and ties of all kinds. He did not wish to be reminded of his identity; but to swim unmolested and undisturbed in his Epicurean dream. When therefore his fair visitors, Clotilde who opened her mouth only to breathe roses and diamonds; and Ermengarde who was so good-natured that she sacrificed even her lovers to her friends; saw him merely to exclaim at the same moment, and with the same voices of thrilling joyousness.

"Why did not you ask him to dinner!"

And then without waiting for his reply entered with that rapidity of elocution which Frenchwomen can alone command into the catalogue of his charms and accomplishments, Lord Monmouth began to regret that he really had not seen Coningsby who it appears might have greatly contributed to the pleasure of the day. The message which was duly given however settled the business. Lord Monmouth felt that any chance of explanations or even allusions to the past was out of the question; and to defend himself from the accusations of his animated guests, he said,

"Well, he shall come to dine with you next time."

There is no end to the influence of woman on our life. It is at the bottom of everything that happens to us. And so it was, that, in spite of all the combinations of Lucretia and Mr. Rigby, and the mortification and resentment of Lord Monmouth, the favourable impression he casually made on a couple of French actresses occasioned Coningsby, before a month had elapsed since his memorable interview at Monmouth House, to receive an invitation again to dine with his grandfather.

The party was very agreeable. Clotilde and Ermengarde had wits as sparkling as their eyes. There was the manager of the Opera, a great friend of Villebecque, and his wife, a very splendid lady who had been a prima donna of celebrity, and still had a commanding voice for a chamber. A Carlist nobleman who lived upon his traditions, and who though without a sou could tell of a festival given by his family before the revolution which had cost a million of francs, and a Neapolitan physician, in whom Lord Monmouth had great confidence and who himself believed in the Elixir Vitæ, made up the party with Lucian Gay, Coningsby and Mr.

Rigby. Our hero remarked that Villebecque on this occasion sat at the bottom of the table, but Flora did not appear.

In the meantime, the month which brought about this satisfactory, and at one time unexpected, result, was fruitful also in other circumstances still more interesting. Coningsby and Edith met frequently, if to breathe the same atmosphere in the same crowded saloons can be described as meeting; ever watching each other's movements and yet studious never to encounter each other's glance. The charms of Miss Millbank had become an universal topic; they were celebrated in ball rooms, they were discussed at clubs; Edith was the beauty of the season. All admired her, many sighed even to express their admiration; but the devotion of Lord Beaumanoir, who always hovered about her, deterred them from a rivalry which might have made the boldest despair. As for Coningsby, he passed his life principally with the various members of the Sydney family; and was almost daily riding with Lady Everingham and her sister, generally accompanied by Lord Henry and his friend Eustace Lyle, between whom indeed and Co-

ningsby there were relations of intimacy scarcely less inseparable. Coningsby had spoken to Lady Everingham of the rumoured marriage of her elder brother, and found, although the family had not yet been formally apprised of it, she entertained very little doubt of its ultimate occurrence. She admired Miss Millbank with whom her acquaintance continued slight; and she wished of course that her brother should marry and be happy, "but Percy is often in love," she would add, "and never likes us to be very intimate with his inamoratas. He thinks it destroys the romance; and that domestic familiarity may compromise his heroic character. However," she added, "I really believe that will be a match."

On the whole, though he bore a serene aspect to the world, Coningsby passed this month in a state of restless misery. His soul was brooding on one subject and he had no confidant; he could not resist the spell that impelled him to the society where Edith might at least be seen; and the circle in which he lived was one in which her name was frequently mentioned. Alone, in his soli-

tary rooms in the Albany, he felt all his desolation; and often a few minutes before he figured in the world apparently followed and courted by all, he had been plunged in the darkest fits of irremediable wetchedness.

He had of course frequently met Lady Wallinger, but their salutations though never omitted and on each side cordial, were brief. There seemed to be a tacit understanding between them not to refer to a subject fruitful in painful reminiscences.

The season waned; in the fulfilment of a project originally formed in the Playing fields of Eton, often recurred to at Cambridge, and cherished with the fondness with which men cling to a scheme of early youth, Coningsby, Henry Sydney, Vere and Buckhurst, had engaged some moors together this year; and in a few days they were about to quit town for Scotland. They had pressed Eustace Lyle to accompany them, but he who in general seemed to have no pleasure greater than their society had surprised them by declining their invitation, with some vague mention that he rather thought he should go abroad.

It was the last day of July, and all the world were at a breakfast given, at a fanciful cottage, situate in beautiful gardens on the banks of the Thames, by Lady Everingham. The weather was as bright as the romances of Boccacio; there were pyramids of strawberries in bowls colossal enough to hold orange trees; and the choicest bands filled the air with enchanting strains, while a brilliant multitude sauntered on turf like velvet, or roamed in desultory existence amid the quivering shades of winding walks.

"My fête was prophetic," said Lady Everingham when she saw Coningsby. "I am glad it is connected with an incident. It gives it a point."

"You are mystical as well as prophetic. Tell me what are we to celebrate."

"Theresa is going to be married."

"Then I too will prophecy and name the hero of the romance—Eustace Lyle."

"You have been more prescient than me," said Lady Everingham, "perhaps because I was thinking too much of some one else."

"It seems to me an union which all must acknowledge perfect. I hardly know which I love best. I have had my suspicions a long

time; and when Eustace refused to go to the moors with us, though I said nothing, I was convinced."

"At any rate," said Lady Everingham sighing with a rather smiling face, "we are kinsfolk Mr. Coningsby; though I would gladly have wished to have been more."

"Were those your thoughts, dear Lady? Ever kind to me! But such happiness," he added in a mournful tone, "I fear can never be mine."

"And why?"

"Ah! 'tis a tale too strange and sorrowful for a day when like Seged we must all determine to be happy."

"You have already made me miserable."

"Here comes a group that will make you gay," said Coningsby as he moved on. Edith and the Wallingers accompanied by Lord Beaumanoir, Mr. Melton and Sir Charles Buckhurst formed the party. They seemed profuse in their congratulations to Lady Everingham, having already learnt the intelligence from her brother.

Coningsby stopped to speak to Lady St. Julians, who had still a daughter to marry. Both Augustina who was at Coningsby Castle,

and Clara Isabella who ought to have been there, had each secured the right man. But Adelaide Victoria had now appeared, and Lady St. Julians had a great regard for the favourite grandson of Lord Monmouth, and also for the influential friend of Lord Vere and Sir Charles Buckhurst. In case Coningsby did not determine to become her son-in-law himself, he might counsel either of his friends to a judicious decision on an inevitable act.

"Strawberries and cream?" said Lord Eskdale to Mr. Ormsby who seemed occupied with some delicacies.

"Egad! no, no, no; those days are passed. I think there is a little easterly wind with all this fine appearance."

"I am for in-door nature myself," said Lord Eskdale. "Do you know I don't half like the way Monmouth is going on. He never gets out of that villa of his. He should change his air more. Tell him."

"It's no use telling him anything. Have you heard anything of Miladi?"

"I had a letter from her to-day; she writes in very good spirits. I am sorry it broke up,

and yet I never thought it would last as long."

"I gave them two years," said Mr. Ormsby, "Lord Monmouth lived with his first wife two years. And afterwards with the Mirandola at Milan, at least nearly two years, it was a year and ten months. I must know, for he called me in to settle affairs. I took the lady to the Baths of Lucca on the pretence that Monmouth would meet us there. He went to Paris. All his great affairs have been two years. I remember I wanted to bet Cassilis at White's on it when he married, but I thought being his intimate friend, the oldest friend he has indeed, and one of his trustees, it was perhaps as well not to do it."

"You should have made the bet with himself," said Lord Eskdale, "and then there never would have been a separation."

"Hah, hah, hah! Do you know I feel the wind."

About an hour after this Coningsby who had just quitted the Duchess, met on the terrace by the river Lady Wallinger walking with Mrs. Guy Flouncey and a Russian Prince whom that

lady was enchanting. Coningsby was about to pass with some slight courtesy, but Lady Wallinger stopped and would speak to him: on very slight subjects; the weather and the fête; but yet enough adroitly managed to make him turn and join her. Mrs. Guy Flouncey walked on a little before with her Russian admirer. Lady Wallinger followed with Coningsby.

"The match that has been proclaimed to-day has greatly surprised me," said Lady Wallinger.

"Indeed!" said Coningsby, "I confess I was long prepared for it. And it seems to me the most natural alliance conceivable and one that every one must approve."

"Lady Everingham seems very much surprised at it."

"Ah! Lady Everingham is a very brilliant personage, and cannot deign to observe obvious circumstances."

"Do you know, Mr. Coningsby, that I always thought you were engaged to Lady Theresa?"

"I!"

"Indeed we were informed more than a month

ago, that you were positively going to be married to her."

"I am not one of those who can shift their affections with such rapidity, Lady Wallinger."

Lady Wallinger looked distressed. "You remember our meeting you on the stairs at —— House, Mr. Coningsby."

"Painfully. It is deeply graven on my brain."

"Edith had just been informed that you were going to be married to Lady Theresa."

"Not surely by him to whom she is herself going to be married," said Coningsby reddening.

"I am not aware that she is going to be married to any one. Lord Beaumanoir admires her; has always admired her. But Edith has given him no encouragement, at least gave him no encouragement as long as she believed—but why dwell on such an unhappy subject, Mr. Coningsby. I am to blame, I have been to blame perhaps before, but indeed I think it cruel, very cruel that Edith and you are kept asunder."

"You have always been my best, my dearest

friend; and are the most amiable and admirable of women. But tell me, is it indeed true that Edith is not going to be married?"

At this moment Mrs. Guy Flouncey turned round, and assuring Lady Wallinger that the Prince and herself had agreed to refer some point to her about the most transcendental ethics of flirtation, this deeply interesting conversation was arrested, and Lady Wallinger with becoming suavity was obliged to listen to the lady's lively appeal of exaggerated nonsense, and the Prince affected protests, while Coningsby walked by her side pale and agitated, and then offered his arm to Lady Wallinger which she accepted with an affectionate pressure. At the end of the terrace they met some other guests, and soon were immersed in the multitude that thronged the lawn.

"There is Sir Joseph," said Lady Wallinger, and Coningsby looked up, and saw Edith on his arm. They were unconsciously approaching them. Lord Beaumanoir was there, but he seemed to shrink into nothing to-day before Buckhurst, who was captivated for the moment by Edith, and hearing that no knight was

resolute enough to try a fall with the Marquess, was impelled by his talent for action to enter the lists. He had talked down everybody, unhorsed every cavalier. Nobody had a chance against him; he answered all your questions before you asked them; contradicted everybody with the intrepidity of a Rigby; annihilated your anecdotes by historiettes infinitely more piquant; and if anybody chanced to make a joke which he could not excel, declared immediately that it was a Joe Miller. He was absurd, extravagant, grotesque, noisy; but he was young, rattling, and interesting from his health and spirits. Edith was extremely amused by him; and was encouraging by her smile his spiritual excesses, when they all suddenly met Lady Wallinger and Coningsby.

The eyes of Edith and Coningsby met for the first time since they so cruelly encountered on the staircase of —— House. A deep, quick blush suffused her face; her eyes gleamed with a sudden corruscation; suddenly and quickly she put forth her hand.

Yes! he presses once more that hand which permanently to retain is the passion of his life,

yet which may never be his! It seemed that for the ravishing delight of that moment, he could have borne with cheerfulness all the dark and harrowing misery of the year that had past away since he embraced her in the woods of Hellingsley, and pledged his faith by the waters of the rushing Darl.

He seized the occasion which offered itself, a moment to walk by her side, and to snatch some brief instants of unreserved communion.

"Forgive me!" she said.

"Ah! how could you ever doubt me!" said Coningsby.

"I was unhappy."

"And now we are to each other as before?"

"And will be; come what come may."

BOOK IX.

CHAPTER I.

It was merry Christmas at St. Geneviève. There was a Yule log blazing on every hearth in that wide domain, from the hall of the squire to the peasant's roof. The Buttery Hatch was open for the whole week from noon to sunset; all comers might take their fill, and each carry away as much bold beef, white bread, and jolly ale as a strong man could bear in a basket with one hand. For every woman a red cloak, and a coat of broad cloth for every

man. All day long, carts laden with fuel and warm raiment were traversing the various districts, distributing comfort and dispensing cheer. For a Christian gentleman of high degree was Eustace Lyle.

Within his hall too he holds his revel, and his beauteous bride welcomes their guests from her noble parents to the faithful tenants of the house. All classes are mingled in the joyous cquality that becomes the season, at once sacred and merry. There are carols for the eventful Eve, and mummers for the festive Day.

The Duke and Duchess and every member of the family had consented this year to keep their Christmas with the newly married couple. Coningsby too was there, and all his friends. The party was numerous, gay, hearty and happy; for they were all united by sympathy.

They were planning that Henry Sydney should be appointed Lord of Misrule, or ordained Abbot of Unreason at the least, so successful had been his revival of the Mummers, the Hobby-horse not forgotten. Their host had intrusted to Lord Henry the restoration of many old observances, and the joyous feeling which

this celebration of Christmas had diffused throughout a very extensive district, was a fresh argument in favour of Lord Henry's principle, that a mere mechanical mitigation of the material necessities of the humbler classes, a mitigation which must inevitably be very limited, can never alone avail sufficiently to ameliorate their condition; that their condition is not merely "a knife and fork question," to use the coarse and shallow phrase of the Utilitarian school; that a simple satisfaction of the grosser necessities of our nature will not make a happy people; that you must cultivate the heart as well as seek to content the belly; and that the surest means to elevate the character of the people is to appeal to their affections.

There is nothing more interesting than to trace predisposition. An indefinite yet strong sympathy with the Peasantry of the realm had been one of the characteristic sensibilities of Lord Henry at Eton. Yet a schoolboy, he had busied himself with their pastimes and the details of their cottage economy. As he advanced in life, the horizon of his views expanded with his intelligence and his experience,

and the son of one of the noblest of our houses, to whom the delights of life are offered with fatal facility, on the very threshold of his career, he devoted his time and thought, labour and life, to one vast and noble purpose, the elevation of the condition of the great body of the people.

"I vote for Buckhurst being Lord of Misrule," said Lord Henry, "I will be content with being his Gentleman Usher.

"It shall be put to the vote," said Lord Vere.

"No one has a chance against Buckhurst," said Coningsby.

"Now, Sir Charles," said Lady Everingham, "your absolute sway is about to commence. And what is your will."

"The first thing must be my formal installation," said Buckhurst. "I vote the Boar's head be carried in procession thrice round the hall, and Beau shall be the champion to challenge all who question my right. Duke, you shall be my chief butler; the Duchess my herbwoman. She is to walk before me, and scatter rosemary. Coningsby shall carry the Boar's head. Lady Theresa and Lady Everingham shall sing the

canticle. Lord Everingham shall be Marshal of the lists, and put all in the stocks who are found sober and decorous. Lyle shall be the palmer from the Holy Land, and Vere shall ride the Hobby-horse. Some must carry cups of Hippocrass; some lighted tapers; all must join in chorus."

He ceased his instructions and all hurried away to carry them into effect. Some hastily arrayed themselves in fanciful dresses, the ladies in robes of white with garlands of flowers, some drew pieces of armour from the wall, and decked themselves with helm and hauberk, others waved ancient banners. They brought in the Boar's head on a large silver dish, and Coningsby raised it aloft. They formed into procession, the Duchess distributing rosemary, Buckhurst swaggering with all the majesty of Tamerlane, his mock court irresistibly humorous with their servility, and the sweet voice of Lady Everingham chaunting the first verse of the Canticle, followed in the second by the rich tones of Lady Theresa.

I.

Caput Apri defero
Reddens laudes Domino
The Boar's heade in hande bring I,
With garlandes gay and rosemary,
I pray you all singe merrily,
Qui estis in conbibio.

II.

Caput Apri defero
Reddens laudes Domino
The Boar's head I understande
Is the chief serbyce in this lande
Loke whereeber it be fande
Serbite cum cantico.

The procession thrice paraded the Hall. Then they stopped, and the Lord of Misrule ascended his throne and his courtiers formed round him in circle. Behind him they held the ancient banners and waved their glittering arms; and placed on a lofty and illuminated pedestal the Boar's head covered with garlands. It was a good picture and the Lord of Misrule sustained his part with untiring energy. He was addressing his court in a pompous rhapsody of merry

nonsense, when a servant approached Coningsby and told him that he was wanted without.

Our hero retired unperceived. A despatch had arrived for him from London. Without any prescience of its purpose, he nevertheless broke the seal with a trembling hand. His presence was immediately desired in town—Lord Monmouth was dead.

CHAPTER II.

THIS was a crisis in the life of Coningsby; yet, like many critical epochs, the person most interested in it was not sufficiently aware of its character. The first feeling which he experienced at the intelligence was sincere affliction. He was fond of his grandfather; had received great kindness from him, and at a period of life when it was most welcome. The neglect and hardships of his early years, instead of leaving a prejudice against one who by some might be esteemed their author, had only rendered by their contrast Coningsby more keenly sensible of the solicitude and enjoyment which had been lavished on his happy youth.

The next impression on his mind was undoubtedly a natural and reasonable speculation on the effect of this bereavement on his fortunes. Lord Monmouth had more than once assured Coningsby that he had provided for him as became a near relative to whom he was attached; and in a manner which ought to satisfy the wants and wishes of an English gentleman. The allowance which Lord Monmouth had made him, as considerable as usually accorded to the eldest sons of wealthy peers, might justify him in estimating his future patrimony as extremely ample. He was aware indeed that at a subsequent period, his grandfather had projected for him fortunes of a still more elevated character. He looked to Coningsby as the future representative of an ancient Barony, and had been purchasing territory with the view of supporting the title. But Coningsby did not by any means firmly reckon on these views being realized. He had a suspicion that in thwarting the wishes of his grandfather in not becoming a candidate for Darlford, he had at the moment arrested arrangements which, from the tone of Lord Monmouth's communication,

he believed were then in progress for that purpose; and he thought it improbable, with his knowledge of his grandfather's habits, that Lord Monmouth had found either time or inclination to resume before his decease the completion of these plans. Indeed there was a period when in adopting the course which he pursued with respect to Darlford, Coningsby was well aware that he perilled more than the large fortune which was to accompany the Barony. Had not a separation between Lord Monmouth and his wife taken place simultaneously with Coningsby's difference with his grandfather, he was conscious that the consequences might have been even altogether fatal to his prospects; but the absence of her evil influence at such a conjuncture, its permanent removal indeed from the scene, coupled with his fortunate though not formal reconciliation with Lord Monmouth, had long ago banished from his memory all those apprehensions to which he had felt it impossible at the time to shut his eyes. Before he left town for Scotland, he had made a farewell visit to his grandfather, who, though not as cordial as in old days, had been gracious; and Coningsby,

during his excursion to the moors, and his various visits to the country, had continued at intervals to write to his grandfather, as had been for some years his custom. On the whole, with an indefinite feeling which, in spite of many a rational effort, did nevertheless haunt his mind, that this great and sudden event might exercise a very vast and beneficial influence on his worldly position, Coningsby could not but feel some consolation in the affliction which he sincerely experienced, in the hope that he might at all events now offer to Edith a home worthy of her charms, her virtues, and her love.

Although he had not seen her since their hurried yet sweet reconciliation in the gardens of Lady Everingham, Coningsby was never long without indirect intelligence of the incidents of her life; and the correspondence between Lady Everingham and Henry Sydney, while they were at the moors, had apprised him that Lord Beaumanoir's suit had terminated unsuccessfully almost immediately after his brother had quitted London.

It was late in the evening when Coningsby arrived in town: he called at once on Lord Esk-

dale, who was one of Lord Monmouth's executors; and he persuaded Coningsby, whom he saw depressed, to dine with him alone.

"You should not be seen at a Club," said the good-natured peer; "and I remember myself in old days what was the wealth of an Albanian larder."

Lord Eskdale at dinner talked very frankly of the disposition of Lord Monmouth's property. He spoke as a matter of course that Coningsby was his grandfather's principal heir.

"I don't know whether you will be happier with a large fortune?" said Lord Eskdale. "It's a troublesome thing; nobody is satisfied with what you do with it; very often not yourself. To maintain an equable expenditure; not to spend too much on one thing, too little on another, is an art. There must be a harmony, a keeping, in disbursement, which very few men have. Great wealth wearies. The thing to have is about ten thousand a-year, and the world to think you have only five. There's some enjoyment then; one is let alone. But the instant you have a large fortune, duties commence. And then impudent fellows bor-

row your money, and if you ask them for it again, they go about town saying you are a Screw."

Lord Monmouth had died suddenly at his Richmond villa, which latterly he never quitted, at a little supper; with no persons near him but those who were very amusing. He suddenly found he could not lift his glass to his lips, and being extremely polite waited a few minutes before he asked Clotilde, who was singing a very sparkling drinking song, to do him that service. When in accordance with his request she reached him, it was too late. The ladies shrieked, being very frightened: at first they were in despair, but after reflection, they evinced some intention of plundering the house. Villebecque who was absent at the moment arrived in time; and every body became orderly and broken-hearted.

The body had been removed to Monmouth House, where it had been embalmed and laid in state. The funeral was not numerously attended. There was nobody in town; some distinguished connexions however came up from the country, though it was a period inconvenient for such

movements. After the funeral, the will was to be read in the principal saloon of Monmouth House, one of those gorgeous apartments that had excited the boyish wonder of Coningsby on his first visit to that paternal roof, and now hung in black adorned with the escutcheon of the deceased peer.

The testamentary dispositions of the late Lord were still unknown, though the names of his executors had been announced by his family solicitor, in whose custody the will and codicils had always remained. The executors under the will were Lord Eskdale, Mr. Ormsby, and Mr. Rigby. By a subsequent appointment, Sidonia was added. All these individuals were now present. Coningsby, who had been chief mourner, stood on the right hand of the solicitor, who sat at the end of a long table, round which in groups were ranged all who had attended the funeral, including several of the superior members of the household; among them M. Villebecque.

The solicitor rose and explained that though Lord Monmouth had been in the habit of very frequently adding codicils to his will, the origi-

nal will however changed or modified had never been revoked; it was therefore necessary to commence by reading that instrument. So saying he sate down, and breaking the seals of a large packet, he produced the will of Philip Augustus, Marquess of Monmouth, which had been retained in his custody since its execution.

By this will, of the date of 1829, the sum of ten thousand pounds was left to Coningsby, then unknown to his grandfather; the same sum to Mr. Rigby. There were a great number of legacies, none of inferior amount, most of them of a less; these were chiefly left to old male companions and women in various countries. There was an almost inconceivable number of small annuities to faithful servants, decayed actors, and obscure foreigners. The residue of his personal estate was left to four gentlemen; three of whom had quitted this world before the legator; the bequests therefore had lapsed. The fourth residuary legatee, in whom according to the terms of the will all would have consequently centred was Mr. Rigby.

There followed several codicils which did not

materially effect the previous disposition; one of them leaving a legacy of £20,000 to the Princess Colonna; until they arrived at the latter part of the year 1832, when a codicil increased the £10,000 left under the will to Coningsby to £50,000.

After Coningsby's visit to the Castle in 1836 a very important change occurred in the disposition of Lord Monmouth's estate. The legacy of £50,000 in his favour was revoked, and the same sum left to the Princess Lucretia. A similar amount was bequeathed to Mr. Rigby; and Coningsby was left sole residuary legatee.

The marriage led to a considerable modification. An estate of about nine thousand a year which Lord Monmouth had himself purchased, and was therefore in his own disposition was left to Coningsby. The legacy to Mr. Rigby was reduced to £20,000, and the whole of his residue left to his issue by Lady Monmouth; in case he died without issue, the estate bequeathed to Coningsby to be taken into account, and the residue then to be divided equally between Lady Monmouth and his grandson. It was

under this instrument that Sidonia had been appointed an executor, and to whom Lord Monmouth left, among others, his celebrated picture of the Holy Family by Murillo, as his friend had often admired it. To Lord Eskdale he left all his female miniatures, and to Mr. Ormsby his rare and splendid collection of French novels, and all his wines, except his Tokay, which he left, with his library to Sir Robert Peel; though this legacy was afterwards revoked in consequence of Sir Robert's conduct about the Irish Corporations.

The solicitor paused and begged permission to send for a glass of water. While this was arranging there was a murmur at the lower part of the room, but little disposition to conversation among those in the vicinity of the lawyer. Coningsby was silent, his brow a little knit; Mr. Rigby was extremely pale and restless, but said nothing. Mr. Ormsby took a pinch of snuff, and offered his box to Lord Eskdale who was next to him. They exchanged glances, and made some observation about the weather. Sidonia stood apart with his arms folded. He had not of course attended the

funeral, nor had he as yet exchanged any recognition with Coningsby.

"Now, gentlemen," said the solicitor, "if you please I will proceed."

They came to the year 1839, the year Coningsby was at Hellingsley. This appeared to be a very critical period in the fortunes of Lady Monmouth; while Coningsby's reached to the culminating point. Mr. Rigby was reduced to his original legacy under the will of £10,000; a sum of equal amount was bequeathed to Armand Villebecque in acknowledgment of faithful services; all the dispositions in favour of Lady Monmouth were revoked, and she was limited to her moderate jointure of £3,000 per annum, under the marriage settlement; while everything without reserve was left absolutely to Coningsby.

A subsequent codicil determined that the £10,000 left to Mr. Rigby should be equally divided between him and Lucian Gay, but as some compensation, Lord Monmouth left to the Right Honourable Nicholas Rigby the bust of that gentleman, which he had himself presented to his Lordship, and which at his desire had

been placed in the vestibule at Coningsby Castle, from the amiable motive that after Lord Monmouth's decease Mr. Rigby might wish perhaps to present it to some other friend.

Lord Eskdale and Mr. Ormsby took care not to catch the eye of Mr. Rigby. As for Coningsby he saw nobody. He maintained during the extraordinary situation in which he was placed a firm demeanour; but serene and regulated as he appeared to the spectators, his nerves were really strung to a high pitch.

There was yet another codicil. It bore the date of June 1840; and was made at Brighton immediately after the separation with Lady Monmouth. It was the sight of this instrument that sustained Rigby at this great emergency. He had a wild conviction that after all, it must set all right. He felt assured that as Lady Monmouth had already been disposed of, it must principally refer to the disheritance of Coningsby—secured by Rigby's well-timed and malignant mis-representations of what had occurred in Lancashire during the preceding summer. And then to whom could Lord

Monmouth leave his money? However he might cut and carve up his fortunes, Rigby, and especially at a moment when he had so served him, must come in for a considerable slice.

His prescient mind was right. All the dispositions in favour of "my grandson Harry Coningsby" were revoked; and he inherited from his grandfather only the interest of the sum of £10,000 which had been originally bequeathed to him in his orphan boyhood. The executors had the power of investing the principal in any way they thought proper for his advancement in life, provided always it was not placed in "the capital stock of any manufactory."

Coningsby turned pale; he lost his abstracted look, he caught the eye of Rigby, he read the latent malice of that nevertheless anxious countenance. What passed through the mind and being of Coningsby was thought and sensation enough for a year, yet it was as the flash that reveals a whole country, yet ceases to be ere one can say it lightens. There was a revelation to him of an inward power that should baffle

these conventional calamities; a natural and sacred confidence in his youth and health, and knowledge and convictions. Even the recollection of Edith was not unaccompanied with some sustaining associations. At least the mightiest foe to their union was departed.

All this was the impression of an instant, simultaneous with the reading of the words of form with which the last testamentary disposition of the Marquess of Monmouth left the sum of £30,000 to Armand Villebecque; and all the rest, residue, and remainder of his unentailed property wheresoever and whatsoever it might be, amounting in value to nearly a million sterling, was given devised and bequeathed to Flora, commonly called Flora Villebecque, the step-child of the said Armand Villebecque, "but who is my natural daughter by Marie Estelle Matteau, an actress at the Théâtre Français in the years 1811—15 by the name of Stella."

CHAPTER III.

"THIS is a crash," said Coningsby with a grave rather than agitated countenance to Sidonia, as his friend came up to greet him without however any expression of condolence.

"This time next year, you will not think so," said Sidonia.

Coningsby shrugged his shoulders.

"The principal annoyance of this sort of miscarriage," said Sidonia, "is the condolence of the gentle world. I think we may now depart. I am going home to dine. Come and discuss your position. For the present we will not speak of it." So saying Sidonia good-naturedly got Coningsby out of the room.

They walked together to Sidonia's house in Carlton Gardens, neither of them making the slightest allusion to the catastrophe; Sidonia inquiring where he had been, what he had been doing, since they last met, and himself conversing in his usual vein, though with a little more feeling in his manner than was his custom. When they had arrived there, Sidonia ordered their dinner instantly, and during the interval between the command and its appearance, he called Coningsby's attention to an old German painting he had just received, its brilliant colouring and quaint costumes.

"Eat, and an appetite will come," said Sidonia, when he observed Coningsby somewhat reluctant. "Take some of that Chablis; it will put you right; you will find it delicious."

In this way some twenty minutes past; their meal was over, and they were alone together.

"I have been thinking all this time of your position," said Sidonia.

"A sorry one, I fear," said Coningsby.

"I really cannot see that," said his friend "You have experienced this morning a disap-

pointment; but not a calamity. If you had lost your eye it would have been a calamity: no combination of circumstances could have given you another. There are really no miseries except natural miseries: conventional misfortunes are mere illusions. What seems conventionally in a limited view a great misfortune, if subsequently viewed in its results, is often the happiest incident in one's life."

"I hope the day may come when I may feel this."

"Now is the moment when philosophy is of use; that is to say, now is the moment when you should clearly comprehend the circumstances which surround you. Holiday philosophy is mere idleness. You think, for example, that you have just experienced a great calamity, because you have lost the fortune on which you counted?"

"I must say I do."

"I ask you again: which would you have rather lost, your grandfather's inheritance or your right leg?"

"Most certainly my inheritance."

"Or your left arm?"

"Still the inheritance."

"Would you have received the inheritance on condition, that your front tooth should have been knocked out."

"No; certainly not."

"Would you have given up a year of your life for that fortune trebled?"

"Even at twenty-three, I would have refused the terms."

"Come, come, Coningsby, the calamity cannot be very great."

"Why you have put it in a very ingenious point of view; and yet it is not easy to convince a man that he should be content who has lost everything."

"You have a great many things at this moment that you separately prefer to the fortune that you have forfeited. How then can you be said to have lost everything?"

"What have I?" said Coningsby, despondingly.

"You have health, youth, good looks, great abilities, considerable knowledge, a fine courage, a lofty spirit, and no contemptible experience. With each of these qualities one might make a

fortune; the combination ought to command the highest."

"You console me," said Coningsby, with a faint blush and a fainter smile.

"I teach you the truth. That is always solacing. I think you are a most fortunate young man; I should not have thought you more fortunate if you had been your grandfather's heir; perhaps less so. But I wish you to comprehend your position: if you understand it, you will cease to lament."

"But what should I do?"

"Bring your intelligence to bear on the right object. I make you no offers of fortune, because I know you would not accept them, and indeed I have no wish to see you a lounger in life. If you had inherited a great patrimony, it is possible your natural character and previous culture might have saved you from its paralysing influence; but it is a question even with you. Now you are free—that is to say you are free, if you are not in debt. A man who has not seen the world, whose fancy is harassed with glittering images of pleasures he has never experienced, cannot live on £300 per annum; but

you can. You have nothing to haunt your thoughts, or disturb the abstraction of your studies. You have seen the most beautiful women; you have banquetted in palaces; you know what heroes and wits and statesmen are made of; and you can draw on your memory instead of your imagination for all those dazzling and interesting objects that make the inexperienced restless, and are the cause of what are called scrapes. But you can do nothing if you be in debt. You must be free. Before therefore we proceed, I must beg you to be frank on this head. If you have any absolute or contingent incumbrances, tell me of them without reserve, and permit me to clear them at once to any amount. You will sensibly oblige me in so doing: because I am interested in watching your career, and if the racer start with a clog my psychological observations will be imperfect."

"You are indeed a friend; and had I debts I would ask you to pay them. I have nothing of the kind. My grandfather was so lavish in his allowance to me that I never got into difficulties. Besides there are horses and things

without end which I must sell, and money at Drummond's."

"That will produce your outfit, whatever the course you adopt. I conceive there are two careers which deserve your consideration. In the first place there is Diplomacy. If you decide upon that, I can assist you. There exists between me and the Minister such relations that I can at once secure you that first step which is so difficult to obtain. After that much, if not all, depends on yourself. But I could advance you, provided you were capable. You should at least not languish for want of preferment. In an important post, I could throw in your way advantages which would soon permit you to control cabinets. Information commands the world. I doubt not your success, and for such a career, speedy. Let us assume it as a fact. Is it a result satisfactory? Suppose yourself in a dozen years a Plenipotentiary at a chief court or at a critical post; with a red ribbon and the Privy Council in immediate perspective; and after a lengthened career, a pension and a peerage. Would that satisfy you? You

don't look excited. I am hardly surprised. In your position, it would not satisfy me. A Diplomatist is after all a phantom. There is a want of nationality about his being. I always look upon Diplomatists as the Hebrews of politics; without country, political creeds, popular convictions, that strong reality of existence which pervades the career of an eminent citizen in a free and great country."

"You read my thoughts," said Coningsby. "I should be sorry to sever myself from England."

"There remains then the other, the greater, the nobler carecr," said Sidonia, "which in England may give you all—the Bar. I am absolutely persuaded that with the requisite qualifications and with perseverance, success at the Bar is certain. It may be rctarded or precipitated by circumstances; but cannot be ultimately affected. You have a right to count with your friends on no lack of opportunities when you arc ripe for them. You appear to me to have all the qualities necessary for the Bar: and you may count on that perseverance, which is indispensablc, for the reason

I have before mentioned, because it will be sustained by your experience."

"I have resolved," said Coningsby; "I will try for the Great Seal."

CHAPTER IV.

ALONE in his chambers, no longer under the sustaining influence of Sidonia's converse and counsel, the shades of night descending and bearing gloom to the gloomy, all the excitement of his spirit evaporated, the heart of Coningsby sank. All now depended on himself, and in that self he had no trust. Why should he succeed? Success was the most rare of results. Thousands fail; units triumph. And even success could only be conducted to him by the course of many years. His career, even if prosperous, was now to commence by the greatest sacrifice which the heart of man could be called upon to sustain. Upon the stern altar of his

fortunes, he must immolate his first and enduring love. Before, he had a perilous position to offer Edith; now he had none. The future might then have aided them; there was no combination which could improve his present. Under any circumstances, he must after all his thought and studies, commence a new novitiate, and before he could enter the arena, must pass years of silent and obscure preparation. 'Twas very bitter. He looked up, his eye caught that drawing of the towers of Hellingsley which she had given him in the days of their happy hearts. That was all that was to remain of their loves. He was to bear it to the future scene of his labours, to remind him through revolving years of toil and routine, that he too had had his romance, had roamed in fair gardens, and whispered in willing ears the secrets of his passion. That drawing was to become the altar piece of his life.

Coningsby passed an agitated night of broken sleep, waking often with a consciousness of having experienced some great misfortune, yet with a very indefinite conception of its nature. He woke exhausted and dispirited. It was a

gloomy day, a raw north-easter blowing up the cloisters of the Albany, in which the fog was lingering, the newspaper on his breakfast table full of rumoured particulars of his grandfather's will, which had of course been duly digested by all who knew him. What a contrast to St. Geneviève! To the bright bracing morn of that merry Christmas! That radiant and cheerful scene, and those gracious and beaming personages, seemed another world and order of beings to the one he now habited and the people with whom he must now commune. The Great Seal indeed! It was the wild excitement of despair, the frenzied hope that blends inevitably with absolute ruin, that could alone have inspired such a hallucination! His unstrung heart deserted him. His energies could rally no more. He gave orders that he was at home to no one; and in his dressing gown and slippers, with his feet resting on the fire-place, the once high-souled and noble-hearted Coningsby delivered himself up to despair.

The day passed in a dark trance rather than a reverie. Nothing rose to his consciousness. He was like a particle of Chaos; at the best, a

glimmering entity of some shadowy Hades. Towards evening the wind changed, the fog dispersed, there came a clear starry night, brisk and bright. Coningsby roused himself, dressed, and wrapping his cloak around him sallied forth. Once more in the mighty streets, surrounded by millions, his petty griefs and personal fortunes assumed their proper position. Well had Sidonia taught him, view everything in its relation to the rest. 'Tis the secret of all wisdom. Here was the mightiest of modern cities; the rival even of the most celebrated of the ancient. Whether he inherited or forfeited fortunes, what was it to the passing throng? They would not share his splendour, or his luxury, or his comfort. But a word from his lip, a thought from his brain expressed at the right time, at the right place, might turn their hearts, might influence their passions, might change their opinions, might affect their destiny. Nothing is great but the personal. As civilisation advances, the accidents of life become each day less important. The power of man, his greatness and his glory, depend on essential qualities. Brains every day become more

precious than blood. You must give men new ideas, you must teach them new words, you must modify their manners, you must change their laws, you must root out prejudices, subvert convictions, if you wish to be great. Greatness no longer depends on rentals; the world is too rich; nor on pedigrees; the world is too knowing.

"The greatness of this city destroys my misery," said Coningsby, "and my genius shall conquer its greatness!"

This conviction of power in the midst of despair was a revelation of intrinsic strength. It is indeed the test of a creative spirit. From that moment all petty fears for an ordinary future quitted him. He felt that he must be prepared for great sacrifices, for infinite suffering; that there must devolve on him a bitter inheritance of obscurity, struggle, envy and hatred, vulgar prejudice, base criticism, petty hostilities, but the dawn would break, and the hour arrive, when the welcome morning hymn of his success and his fame would sound and be re-echoed.

He returned to his rooms; calm, resolute.

He slept the deep sleep of a man void of anxiety; that has neither hope nor fear to haunt his visions, but is prepared to rise on the morrow collected for the great human struggle.

And the morrow came. Fresh, vigorous, not rash or precipitate, yet determined to lose no time in idle meditation, Coningsby already resolved at once to quit his present residence was projecting a visit to some legal quarter, where he intended in future to reside, when his servant brought him a note. The handwriting was feminine. The note was from Flora. The contents were brief. She begged Mr. Coningsby with great earnestness to do her the honour and the kindness of calling on her at his earliest convenience, at the hotel in Brook Street where she now resided.

It was an interview which Coningsby would rather have avoided; yet it seemed to him, after a moment's reflection, neither just nor kind, nor manly to refuse her request. Flora had not injured him. She was after all his kin. Was it for a moment to be supposed that he was envious of her lot? He replied, therefore, that in an hour he would wait upon her.

In an hour then two individuals are to be brought together, whose first meeting was held under circumstances most strangely different. Then Coningsby was the patron, a generous and spontaneous one, of a being obscure, almost friendless, and sinking under bitter mortification. His favour could not be the less appreciated because he was the chosen relative of a powerful noble. That noble was no more; his vast inheritance had devolved on the disregarded, even despised actress, whose suffering emotions Coningsby had then soothed, and whose fortune had risen on the destruction of all his prospects, and the baulk of all his aspirations.

Flora was alone when Coningsby was ushered into the room. The extreme delicacy of her appearance was increased by her deep mourning, and seated in a cushioned chair, from which she seemed to rise with an effort, she certainly presented little of the character of a fortunate and prosperous heiress.

"You are very good to come to me," she said, faintly smiling.

Coningsby extended his hand to her affec-

tionately in which she placed her own, looking down much embarrassed.

"You have an agreeable situation here," said Coningsby, trying to break the first awkwardness of their meeting.

"Yes; but I hope not to stay here long."

"You are going abroad?"

"No; I hope never to leave England!"

There was a slight pause; and then Flora sighed and said:

"I wish to speak to you on a subject that gives me pain; yet of which I must speak. You think I have injured you?"

"I am sure," said Coningsby in a tone of great kindness, "that you could injure no one."

"I have robbed you of your inheritance."

"It was not mine by any right legal or moral. There were others who might have urged an equal claim to it; and there are many who will now think that you might have preferred a superior one."

"You had enemies; I was not one. They sought to benefit themselves by injuring you. They have not benefited themselves; let them

not say, that they have at least injured you."

"We will care not what they say," said Coningsby, "I can sustain my lot."

"Would that I could mine!" said Flora. She sighed again with a downcast glance. Then looking up embarrassed and blushing deeply, she added: "I wish to restore to you that fortune of which I have unconsciously and unwillingly deprived you."

"The fortune is yours, dear Flora, by every right;" said Coningsby much moved; "and there is no one who wishes more fervently, that it may contribute to your happiness than I do."

"It is killing me," said Flora, mournfully; then speaking with unusual animation, with a degree of excitement, she continued: "I must tell what I feel. This fortune is yours. I am happy in the inheritance, if you generously receive it from me, because Providence has made me the means of baffling your enemies. I never thought to be so happy as I shall be if you will generously accept this fortune, always intended for you. I have lived then for a

purpose; I have not lived in vain; I have returned to you some service, however humble, for all your—goodness to me in my unhappiness."

"You are, as I have ever thought you, the kindest and most tender-hearted of beings. But you misconceive our mutual positions, my gentle Flora. The custom of the world does not permit such acts to either of us as you contemplate. The fortune is yours. It is left you by one on whose affections you had the highest claim. I will not say that so large an inheritance does not bring with it an alarming responsibility; but you are not unequal to it. Have confidence in yourself. You have a good heart; you have good sense; you have a well-principled being. Your spirit will mount with your fortunes, and blend with them. You will be happy."

"And you?"

"I shall soon learn to find content, if not happiness, from other sources," said Coningsby; "and mere riches, however vast, could at no time have secured my felicity."

"But they may secure that which brings felicity," said Flora, speaking in a choaking voice, and not meeting the glance of Co-

ningsby. "You had some views in life which displeased him who has done all this; they may be, they must be, affected by this fatal caprice. Speak to me, for I cannot speak, dear Mr. Coningsby; do not let me believe that I, who would sacrifice my life for your happiness, am the cause of such calamities!"

"Whatever be my lot, I repeat I can sustain it," said Coningsby with a cheek of scarlet.

"Ah! he is angry with me," exclaimed Flora, "he is angry with me," and the tears stole down her pale cheek.

"No, no, no, dear Flora; I have no other feelings to you but those of affection and respect," and Coningsby much agitated drew his chair nearer to her and took her hand. "I am gratified by these kind wishes, though they are utterly impracticable; but they are the witnesses of your sweet disposition and your noble spirit. There never shall exist between us, under any circumstances, other feelings but those of kin and kindness."

He rose as if to depart. When she saw that, she started, and seemed to summon all her energies.

"You are going," she exclaimed, "and I have said nothing, I have said nothing. And I shall never see you again. Let me tell you what I mean. This fortune is yours; it must be yours. It is an arrow in my heart. Do not think I am speaking from a momentary impulse. I know myself. I have lived so much alone; I have had so little to deceive or to delude me; that I know myself. If you will not let me do justice, you declare my doom. I cannot live if my existence is the cause of all your prospects being blasted, and the sweetest dreams of your life being defeated. When I die, these riches will be yours; that you cannot prevent. Refuse my present offer, and you seal the fate of that unhappy Flora, whose fragile life has hung for years on the memory of your kindness."

"You must not say these words, dear Flora, you must not indulge in these gloomy feelings. You must live, and you must live happily. You have every charm and virtue which should secure happiness. The duties and the affections of existence will fall to your lot. It is one

that will always interest me, for I shall ever be your friend. You have conferred on me one of the most delightful of feelings—gratitude, and for that I bless you. I will soon see you again." Mournfully he bade her farewell.

CHAPTER V.

ABOUT a week after this interview with Flora, as Coningsby one morning was about to sally forth from the Albany to visit some chambers in the Temple to which his notice had been attracted, there was a loud ring, a bustle in the hall, and Henry Sydney and Buckhurst were ushered in.

There never was such a cordial meeting; and yet the faces of his friends were serious. The truth is, the paragraphs in the newspapers had circulated in the country, they had written to Coningsby, and after a brief delay he had confirmed their worst apprehensions. Immediately they came up to town. Henry Sydney, a

younger son, could offer little but sympathy, but he declared that it was his intention also to study for the Bar, so they should not be divided. Buckhurst after many embraces, and some ordinary talk, took Coningsby aside, and said, "My dear fellow, I have no objection to Henry Sydney hearing everything I say; but still these are subjects which men like to be discussed in private. Of course I expect you to share my fortune. There is enough for both. We will have an exact division."

There was something in Buckhurst's fervent resolution very loveable and a little humorous, just enough to put one in a good temper with human nature and life. If there were any fellow's fortune in the world that Coningsby would share, Buckhurst's would have had the preference, but while he pressed his hand, and with a glance in which a tear and a smile seemed to contend for mastery, he gently indicated why such arrangements were with our present manners impossible.

"I see," said Buckhurst after a moment's thought. "I quite agree with you. The thing cannot be done; and to tell you the truth, a

fortune is a bore. What I vote that we three do at once is to take plenty of ready money, and enter the Austrian service. By Jove, it is the only thing to do."

"There is something in that," said Coningsby. "In the meantime, suppose you two fellows walk with me to the Temple; for I have an appointment to look at some chambers."

It was a fine day, and it was by no means a gloomy walk. Though the two friends had arrived full of indignation against Lord Monmouth and miserable about their companion, once more in his society and finding little difference in his carriage, they assumed unconsciously their habitual tone. As for Buckhurst, he was delighted with the Temple which he visited for the first time. The name enchanted him. The tombs in the Church convinced him that the Crusades were the only career. He would have himself become a law student, if he might have prosecuted his studies in chain armour. The calmer Henry Sydney was consoled for the misfortunes of Coningsby by a fanciful project himself to pass a portion of his life amid these halls and courts, gardens and terraces, that maintain

in the heart of a great city in the nineteenth century so much of the grave romance and picturesque decorum of our past manners. Henry Sydney was very sanguine; he was reconciled to the disinheritance of Coningsby by the conviction that it was a providential dispensation to make him a Lord Chancellor.

These faithful friends remained in town with Coningsby until he was established in Paper Buildings, and had become a pupil of a celebrated special pleader. They would have remained longer, had not he himself suggested that it was better that they should part. They parted with deep emotion. It seemed a terrible catastrophe after all the visions of their boyish days; their college dreams; and their dazzling adventures in the world.

"And this is the end of Coningsby, the brilliant Coningsby, that we all loved, that was to be our leader!" said Buckhurst to Lord Henry as they quitted him. "Well, come what may, life has lost something of its bloom."

"The great thing now," said Lord Henry, "is to keep up the chain of our friendship. We must write to him very often; and contrive to

be frequently together. It is dreadful to think that in the ways of life our hearts may become estranged. I never felt more wretched than I do at this moment, and yet I have faith that we shall not lose him."

"Amen!" said Buckhurst, "but I feel my plan about the Austrian service was after all the only thing. The continent offers a career. He might have been Prime Minister: several strangers have been; and as for war, look at Brown and Laudohn and half a hundred others. I had a much better chance of being a Field-Marshal than he has of being a Lord Chancellor."

"I feel quite convinced that Coningsby will be Lord Chancellor," said Henry Sydney gravely.

This change of life for Coningsby was a great social revolution. It was sudden and complete. Within a month after the death of his grandfather, his name had been erased from all his fashionable clubs, his horses and carriages sold, and he had become a student of the Temple. He entirely devoted himself to his new pursuit. His being was completely absorbed in it. There

was nothing to haunt his mind; no inexperienced scene or sensation of life to distract his intelligence. One sacred thought alone indeed there remained, shrined in the innermost sanctuary of his heart and consciousness. But it was a tradition, no longer a hope. The moment that he had fairly recovered from the first shock of his grandfather's will, had clearly ascertained the consequences to himself, and had resolved on the course to pursue, he had communicated unreservedly with Oswald Millbank, and had renounced those pretensions to the hand of his sister which it ill became the destitute to prefer.

His letter was answered in person. Millbank met Henry Sydney and Buckhurst at the chambers of Coningsby. Once more they were all four together; but under what different circumstances, and with what different prospects to those which attended their separation at Eton! Alone with Coningsby, Millbank spoke to him things which letters could not convey. He bore to him all the sympathy and devotion of Edith, but they would not conceal from themselves that, at this moment, and in the present state of affairs,

all was hopeless. In no way did Coningsby ever permit himself to intimate to Oswald the cause of his disinheritance. He was of course silent on it to his other friends, as any communication of the kind must have touched on a subject that was consecrated in his inmost soul.

CHAPTER VI.

THE state of political parties in England in the spring of 1841 offered a most remarkable contrast to their condition at the period commemorated in the first chapter of this work. The banners of the Conservative camp at this moment lowered on the Whig forces as the gathering host of the Norman invader frowned on the coast of Sussex. The Whigs were not yet conquered, but they were doomed; and they themselves knew it. The mistake which was made by the Conservative leaders in not retaining office in 1839, and whether we consider their conduct in a national and constitutional light, or as a mere question of political tactics

and party prudence, it was unquestionably a great mistake, had infused into the corpse of Whig authority a kind of galvanic action, which only the superficial could mistake for vitality. Even to form a basis for their future operations, after the conjuncture of —39, the Whigs were obliged to make a fresh inroad on the revenue, the daily increasing debility of which was now arresting attention, and exciting public alarm. It was clear that the catastrophe of the government would be financial.

Under all the circumstances of the case, the conduct of the Whig Cabinet in their final propositions cannot be described as deficient either in boldness or prudence. The policy which they recommended was in itself a sagacious and spirited policy, but they erred in supposing that at the period it was brought forward any measures promoted by the Whigs could have obtained general favour in the country. The Whigs were known to be feeble; they were looked upon as tricksters. The country knew they were opposed by a very powerful party, and though there certainly never was any authority for the belief, the country did believe that that

powerful party were influenced by great principles; had in their view a definite and national policy; and would secure England, instead of a feeble administration and fluctuating opinions, energy and a creed.

The future effect of the Whig propositions of —41 will not be detrimental to that party, even if in the interval they be appropriated piecemeal, as will probably be the case, by their Conservative successors. But for the moment, and in the plight in which the Whig party found themselves, it was impossible to have devised measures more conducive to their precipitate fall. Great interests were menaced by a weak government. The consequence was inevitable. Tadpole and Taper saw it in a moment. They snuffed the factious air, and felt the coming storm. Notwithstanding the extreme congeniality of these worthies, there was a little latent jealousy between them. Tadpole worshipped Registration; Taper adored a Cry. Tadpole always maintained that it was the winnowing of the electoral lists that could alone gain the day; Taper, on the contrary, faithful to ancient traditions was ever of opinion that

the game must ultimately be won by popular clamor. It always seemed so impossible that the Conservative party could ever be popular, the extreme graciousness and personal popularity of the leaders not being generally esteemed a sufficient hedge against the inveterate odium that attached to their opinions, that the Tadpole philosophy was the favoured tenet in high places; and Taper had had his knuckles well rapped more than once for manœuvring too actively against the New Poor Law, and for hiring several link-boys to bawl a much wronged lady's name in the Park when the Court prorogued Parliament.

And now after all in 1841 it seemed that Taper was right. There was a great clamour in every quarter, and the clamour was against the Whigs and in favour of Conservative principles. What Canadian timber merchants meant by Conservative principles it is not difficult to conjecture; or West India planters. It was tolerably clear on the hustings what squires and farmers and their followers meant by Conservative principles. What they mean by Conservative principles now is another question; and whether Conservative principles mean some-

thing higher than the perpetuation of fiscal arrangements some of them very impolitic, none of them very important. But no matter what different bodies of men understood by the cry in which they all joined, the Cry existed; Taper beat Tadpole; and the great Conservative party beat the shattered and exhausted Whigs.

Notwithstanding the abstraction of his legal studies, Coningsby could not be altogether insensible to the political crisis. In the political world of course he never mixed, but the friends of his boyhood were deeply interested in affairs, and they lost no opportunity which he would permit them, of cultivating his society. Their occasional fellowship, a visit now and then to Sidonia, and a call sometimes on Flora who lived at Richmond, comprised his social relations. His general acquaintance did not desert him, but he was out of sight, and did not wish to be remembered. Mr. Ormsby asked him to dinner, and occasionally mourned over his fate in the bow window of Whites; while Lord Eskdale even went to see him in the Temple, was interested in his progress, and said with an encouraging look, that when he was called to

the bar, all his friends must join and get up the steam. Coningsby had once met Mr. Rigby who was walking with the Duke of Agincourt, which was probably the reason he could not notice a lawyer. Mr. Rigby cut Coningsby.

Lord Eskdale had obtained from Villebecque very accurate details as to the cause of Coningsby being disherited. Our hero, if one in such fallen fortunes may still be described as a hero, had mentioned to Lord Eskdale his sorrow that his grandfather had died in anger with him; but Lord Eskdale, without dwelling on the subject, had assured him that he had reason to believe that if Lord Monmouth had lived, affairs would have been different. He had altered the disposition of his property at a moment of great and general irritation and excitement, and had been too indolent, perhaps really too indisposed, which he was unwilling ever to acknowledge, to recur to a calmer and more equitable settlement. Lord Eskdale had been more frank with Sidonia, and had told him all about the refusal to become a candidate for Darlford against Mr. Mill-

bank, the communication of Rigby to Lord Monmouth as to the presence of Oswald Millbank at the Castle and the love of Coningsby for his sister; all these details, furnished by Villebecque to Lord Eskdale had been duly transferred by that nobleman to his co-executor; and Sidonia, when he had sufficiently digested them, had made Lady Wallinger acquainted with the whole history.

The Dissolution of the Whig Parliament by the Whigs, the project of which had reached Lord Monmouth a year before, and yet in which nobody believed to the last moment, at length took place. All the world was dispersed in the heart of the season, and our solitary student of the Temple in his lonely chambers notwithstanding all his efforts, found his eye rather wander over the pages of Tidd and Chitty as he remembered that the great event to which he had so long looked forward was now occurring, and he after all was no actor in the mighty drama. It was to have been the epoch of his life; when he was to have found himself in that proud position for which all the studies, and meditations, and higher

impulses of his nature, had been preparing him. It was a keen trial of a man. Every one of his friends and old companions were candidates and with sanguine prospects. Lord Henry was certain for a division of his county; Buckhurst harangued a large agricultural borough in his vicinity; Eustace Lyle and Vere stood in coalition for a Yorkshire town; and Oswald Millbank solicited the suffrages of a very important manufacturing constituency. They sent their addresses to Coningsby. He was deeply interested as he traced in them the influence of his own mind; often recognised the very expressions to which he had habituated them. Amid the confusion of a general election, no unimpassioned critic had time to canvass the language of an address to an isolated constituency; yet an intelligent speculator on the movements of political parties might have detected in these public declarations some intimation of new views, and of a tone of political feeling that has unfortunately been too long absent from the public life of this country.

It was the end of a sultry July day, the last

ray of the sun shooting down Pall Mall sweltering with dust; there was a crowd round the doors of the Carlton and the Reform Clubs, and every now and then an express arrived with the agitating bulletin of a fresh defeat or a new triumph. Coningsby was walking up Pall Mall. He was going to dine at the Oxford and Cambridge Club, the only club on whose list he had retained his name, that he might occasionally have the pleasure of meeting an Eton or Cambridge friend without the annoyance of encountering any of his former fashionable acquaintances. He lighted in his walk on Mr. Tadpole and Mr. Taper, both of whom he knew. The latter did not notice him, but Mr. Tadpole more good-natured bestowed on him a rough nod, not unmarked by a slight expression of coarse pity.

Coningsby ordered his dinner, and then took up the evening papers, where he learnt the return of Vere and Lyle; and read a speech of Buckhurst denouncing the Venetian Constitution to the amazement of several thousand persons apparently not a little terrified by this

unknown danger, now first introduced to their notice. Being true Englishmen, they were all against Buckhurst's opponent, who was of the Venetian party, and who ended by calling out Buckhurst for his personalities.

Coningsby had dined, and was reading in the library, when a waiter brought up a third edition of the Sun, with electioneering bulletins from the manufacturing districts to the very latest hour. Some large letters which expressed the name of Darlford caught his eye. There seemed great excitement in that borough; strange proceedings had happened. The column was headed, "Extraordinary Affair! Withdrawal of the Liberal Candidate! Two Tory Candidates in the field!!!"

His eye glanced over an animated speech of Mr. Millbank, his countenance changed, his heart palpitated. Mr. Millbank had resigned the representation of the town but not from weakness; his avocations demanded his presence; he had been requested to let his son supply his place, but his son was otherwise provided for; he should always take a deep

interest in the town and trade of Darlford; he hoped that the link between the Borough and Hellingsley would be ever cherished (loud cheering); he wished in parting from them to take a step which should conciliate all parties, put an end to local heats and factious contentions, and secure the town an able and worthy representative. For these reasons he begged to propose to them a gentleman who bore a name which many of them greatly honoured, for himself he knew the individual, and it was his firm opinion that whether they considered his talents, his character, or the ancient connection of his family with the district, he could not propose a candidate more worthy of their confidence than HARRY CONINGSBY, ESQ.

This proposition was received with that wild enthusiasm which occasionally bursts out in the most civilised communities. The contest between Millbank and Rigby was equally balanced, neither party was over confident. The Conservatives were not particularly zealous in behalf of their champion; there was no Marquess of Monmouth and no Coningsby Castle now to

back him; he was fighting on his own resources; and he was a beaten horse. The Liberals did not like the prospect of a defeat and dreaded the mortification of Rigby's triumph. The moderate man who thought more of local than political circumstances liked the name of Coningsby. Mr. Millbank had dexterously prepared his leading supporters for the substitution. Some traits of the character and conduct of Coningsby had been cleverly circulated. Thus there was a combination of many favourable causes in his favour. In half an hour's time his image was stamped on the brain of every inhabitant of the Borough as an interesting and accomplished youth, who had been wronged and who deserved to be rewarded. It was whispered that Rigby was his enemy. Bully Bluck and his mob offered Mr. Millbank's Committee to throw Mr. Rigby into the river; or to burn down his hotel, in case he was prudent enough not to show. Mr. Rigby determined to fight to the last. All his hopes were now staked on the successful result of this contest. It was impossible if he were returned

that his friends could refuse him high office. The whole of Lord Monmouth's reduced legacy was devoted to this end. The third edition of the Sun left Mr. Rigby in vain attempting to address an infuriated populace.

Here was a revolution in the fortunes of our forlorn Coningsby! When his grandfather first sent for him to Monmouth House, his destiny was not verging on greater vicissitudes. He rose from his seat, and was surprised that all the silent gentlemen who were about him did not mark his agitation. Not an individual there that he knew. It was now an hour to midnight, and to-morrow the almost unconscious candidate was to go to the poll. In a tumult of suppressed emotion, Coningsby returned to his chambers. He found a letter in his box from Oswald Millbank, who had been twice at the Temple. Oswald had been returned without a contest, and had reached Darlford in time to hear Coningsby nominated. He set off instantly to London for Coningsby and left at his friend's chambers a rapid narrative of what had happened, with information that he should call on him again on the morrow at nine o'clock,

when they were to repair together immediately to Darlford in time for Coningsby to be chaired, for no one entertained a doubt of his triumph.

Coningsby did not sleep a wink that night, and yet when he rose early felt fresh enough for any exploit however difficult or hazardous. He felt as an Egyptian does when the Nile rises after its elevation had been despaired of. At the very lowest ebb of his fortunes, an event had occurred which seemed to restore all. He dared not contemplate the ultimate result of all these wonderful changes. Enough for him that when all seemed dark, he was about to be returned to Parliament by the father of Edith, and his vanquished rival who was to bite the dust before him, was the author of all his misfortunes. Love, Vengeance, Justice, the glorious pride of having acted rightly, the triumphant sense of complete and absolute success—here were chaotic materials from which order was at length evolved; and all-subsided in an overwhelming feeling of gratitude to that Providence that had so signally protected him.

There was a knock at the door. It was Oswald. They embraced. It seemed that

Oswald was as excited as Coningsby. His eye sparkled, his manner was energetic.

"We must talk it all over during our journey. We have not a minute to waste."

During that journey, Coningsby learned something of the course of affairs which gradually had brought about so singular a revolution in his favour. We mentioned that Sidonia had acquired a thorough knowledge of the circumstances which had occasioned and attended the disheritance of Coningsby. These he had told to Lady Wallinger, first by letter, afterwards in more detail on her arrival in London. Lady Wallinger had conferred with her husband. She was not surprised at the goodness of Coningsby, and she sympathized with all his calamities. He had ever been the favourite of her judgment, and her romance had always consisted in blending his destinies with those of her beloved Edith. Sir Joseph was a judicious man, who never cared to commit himself; a little selfish, but good, just and honourable, with some impulses only a little afraid of them; but then his wife stepped in like an angel and gave them the right direction. They were both

absolutely impressed with Coningsby's admirable conduct, and Lady Wallinger was determined that her husband should express to others the convictions which he acknowledged in unison with herself. Sir Joseph spoke to Mr. Millbank who stared, but Sir Joseph spoke feebly. Lady Wallinger conveyed all this intelligence and all her impressions to Oswald and Edith. The younger Millbank talked with his father, who making no admissions listened with interest, inveighed against Lord Monmouth, and condemned his will.

After some time, Mr. Millbank made inquiries about Coningsby, took an interest in his career, and, like Lord Eskdale, declared that when he was called to the bar, his friends would have an opportunity to evince their sincerity. Affairs remained in this state, until Oswald thought that circumstances were sufficiently ripe to urge his father on the subject. The position which Oswald had assumed at Millbank had necessarily made him acquainted with the affairs and fortune of his father. When he computed the vast wealth which he knew was at his parent's command, and recalled

Coningsby in his humble chambers toiling after all his noble efforts without any results, and his sister pining in a provincial solitude, Oswald began to curse wealth and to ask himself what was the use of all their marvellous industry and supernatural skill. He addressed his father with that irresistible frankness which a strong faith can alone inspire. What are the objects of wealth if not to bless those who possess our hearts? The only daughter, the friend to whom the only son was indebted for his life—here are two beings surely whom one would care to bless, and both are unhappy. Mr. Millbank listened without prejudice, for he was already convinced. But he felt some interest in the present conduct of Coningsby. A Coningsby working for his bread was a novel incident for him. He wished to be assured of its authenticity. He was resolved to convince himself of the fact. And perhaps he would have gone on yet for a little time, and watched the progress of the experiment, already interested and delighted by what had reached him, had not the dissolution brought affairs to a crisis. The misery of Oswald at the position of Coningsby,

the silent sadness of Edith, his own conviction which assured him that he could do nothing wiser or better than take this young man to his heart, so ordained it that Mr. Millbank who was after all the creature of impulse, decided suddenly, and decided rightly. Never making a single admission to all the representations of his son, Mr. Millbank in a moment did all that his son could have dared to desire.

This is a very imperfect and crude intimation of what had occurred at Millbank and Hellingsley; yet it conveys a faint sketch of the enchanting intelligence that Oswald conveyed to Coningsby during their rapid travel. When they arrived at Birmingham they found a messenger and a despatch informing Coningsby that at mid-day at Darlford he was at the head of the poll by an overwhelming majority, and that Mr. Rigby had resigned. He was however requested to remain at Birmingham, as they did not wish him to enter Darlford except to be chaired, so he was to arrive there in the morning. At Birmingham therefore they remained.

There was Oswald's election to talk of as well as Coningsby's. They had hardly

had time for this. Now they were both Members of Parliament. Men must have been at school together, to enjoy the real fun of meeting thus and realizing boyish dreams. Often years ago they had talked of these things and assumed these results, but those were words and dreams; these were positive facts; after some doubts and struggles, in the freshness of their youth, Oswald Millbank and Harry Coningsby were Members of the British Parliament; public characters, responsible agents, with a career.

This afternoon at Birmingham was as happy an afternoon as usually falls to the lot of man. Both of these companions were labouring under that degree of excitement which is necessary to felicity. They had enough to talk about. Edith was no longer a forbidden or a sorrowful subject. There was rapture in their again meeting under such circumstances. Then there were their friends; that dear Buckhurst, who had just been called out for styling his opponent a Venetian, and all their companions of early days. What a sudden and marvellous change in all their destinies! Life was a pantomime; the wand was waved, and it seemed that the schoolfellows had of a sudden

become elements of power, springs of the great machine.

A train arrived; restless they sallied forth to seek diversion in the dispersion of the passengers. Coningsby and Millbank, with that glance, a little inquisitive, even impertinent, if we must confess it, with which one greets a stranger when he emerges from a public conveyance, were lounging on the platform. The train arrived; stopped; the doors were thrown open, and from one of them emerged Mr. Rigby! Coningsby, who had dined, was greatly tempted to take off his hat and make him a bow, but he refrained. Their eyes met. Rigby was dead beat. He was evidently used up; a man without a resource; the sight of Coningsby his last blow; he had met his fate.

"My dear fellow," said Coningsby, "I remember I wanted you to dine with my grandfather at Montem, and that fellow would not ask you. Such is life!"

About eleven o'clock the next morning they arrived at the Darlford station. Here they were met by an anxious deputation, who received Coningsby as if he were a prophet, and ushered him into a car covered with satin and blue

ribbons, and drawn by six beautiful grey horses caparisoned in his colours, and ridden by postillions, whose very whips were blue and white. Triumphant music sounded; banners waved; the multitude were marshalled; the Freemasons at the first opportunity fell into the procession; the Odd Fellows joined it at the nearest corner. Preceded and followed by thousands, with colours flying, trumpets sounding, and endless huzzas, flags and handkerchiefs waving from every window, and every balcony filled with dames and maidens bedecked with his colours, Coningsby was borne through enthusiastic Darlford like Paulus Emilius returning from Macedon. Uncovered, still in deep mourning, his fine figure and graceful bearing, and his intelligent brow, at once won every female heart.

The singularity was that all were of the same opinion: everybody cheered him, every house was adorned with his colours. His triumphant return was no party question; Magog Wrath and Bully Bluck walked together like lambs at the head of his procession.

The car stopped before the principal hotel in the High Street. It was Mr. Millbank's com-

mittee. The broad street was so crowded, that as every one declared you might have walked on the heads of the people. Every window was full; the very roofs were peopled. The car stopped, and the populace gave three cheers for Mr. Millbank. Their late member surrounded by his friends stood in the balcony which was fitted up with Coningsby's colours and bore his name on the hangings in gigantic letters formed of dahlias. The flashing and inquiring eye of Coningsby caught the form of Edith, who was leaning on her father's arm.

The hustings were opposite the hotel, and here after a while Coningsby was carried, and stepping from his car, took up his post to address for the first time a public assembly. Anxious as the people were to hear him, it was long before their enthusiasm could subside into silence. At length that silence was deep and absolute. He spoke; his powerful and rich tones reached every ear. In five minutes' time every one looked at his neighbour, and without speaking they agreed that there never was anything like this heard in Darlford before.

He addressed them for a considerable time for he had a great deal to say; not only

to express his gratitude for the unprecedented manner in which he had become their representative and for the spirit in which they had greeted him; but he had to offer them no niggard exposition of the views and opinions of the member whom they had so confidingly chosen without even a formal declaration of his sentiments.

He did this with so much clearness, and in a manner so pointed and popular, that the deep attention of the multitude never wavered. His lively illustrations kept them often in continued merriment. But when towards his close he drew some picture of what he hoped might be the character of his future and lasting connexion with the town, the vast throng was singularly affected. There were a great many present at that moment who though they had never seen Coningsby before, would willingly have then died for him. Coningsby had touched their hearts, for he had spoken from his own. His spirit had entirely magnetized them. Darlford believed in Coningsby: and a very good creed.

And now Coningsby was conducted to the opposite hotel. He walked through the crowd.

The progress was slow, as every one wished to shake hands with him. His friends, however, at last safely landed him. He sprang up the stairs: he was met by Mr. Millbank, who welcomed him with the greatest warmth, and offered his hearty congratulations.

"It is to you, dear sir, that I am indebted for all this," said Coningsby.

"No," said Mr. Millbank, "it is to your own high principles, great talents, and good heart."

After he had been presented by the late Member to the principal personages in the borough, Mr. Millbank said:

"I think we must now give Mr. Coningsby a little rest. "Come with me," he added; "here is some one who will be very glad to see you."

Speaking thus, he led our hero a little away, and placing his arm in Coningsby's, with great affection opened the door of an apartment. There was Edith radiant with loveliness and beaming with love. Their agitated hearts told at a glance the tumult of their joy. The father joined their hands, and blessed them with words of tenderness.

CHAPTER VII.

THE marriage of Coningsby and Edith took place early in the autumn. It was solemnized at Millbank, and they passed their first moon at Hellingsley, which place was in future to be the residence of the member for Darlford. The estate was to devolve to Coningsby after the death of Mr. Millbank who in the meantime made arrangements which permitted the newly-married couple to reside at the Hall in a manner becoming its occupants. All these settlements, as Mr. Millbank assured Coningsby, were effected not only with the sanction, but at the express instance, of his son.

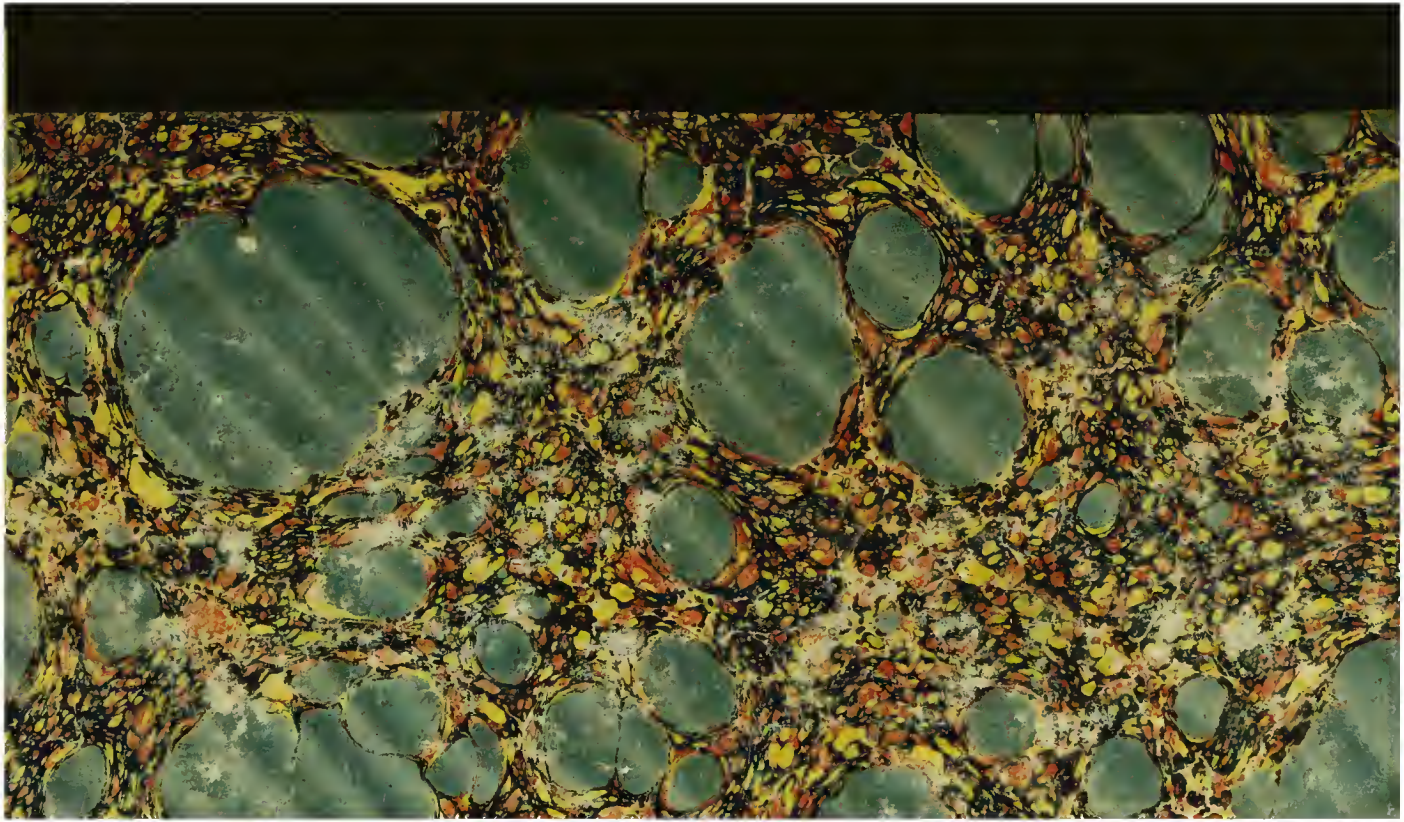
An event however occurred not very long after the marriage of Coningsby which rendered this generous conduct of his father-in-law no longer necessary to his fortunes, though he never forgot its exercise. The gentle and unhappy daughter of Lord Monmouth quitted a scene with which her spirit had never greatly sympathized. Perhaps she might have lingered in life for yet a little while, had it not been for that fatal inheritance which disturbed her peace and embittered her days, haunting her heart with the recollection that she had been the unconscious instrument of injuring the only being whom she loved, and embarrassing and encumbering her with duties foreign to her experience and her nature. The marriage of Coningsby had greatly affected her, and from that day she seemed gradually to decline. She died towards the end of the autumn, and subject to an ample annuity to Villebecque, she bequeathed the whole of her fortune to the husband of Edith. Gratifying as it was to him to present such an inheritance to his wife, it was not without a pang that he received the intelligence of the death of Flora. Edith sympathized in his affectionate feelings,

and they raised a monument to her memory in the gardens of Hellingsley.

Coningsby passed his next Christmas in his own hall with his beautiful and gifted wife by his side and surrounded by the friends of his heart and his youth.

They stand now on the threshold of public life. They are in the leash, but in a moment they will be slipped. What will be their fate? Will they maintain in august assemblies and high places the great truths which in study and in solitude they have embraced? Or will their courage exhaust itself in the struggle, their enthusiasm evaporate before hollow-hearted ridicule, their generous impulses yield with a vulgar catastrophe to the tawdry temptations of a low ambition? Will their skilled intelligence subside into being the adroit tool of a corrupt party? Will Vanity confound their fortunes, or Jealousy wither their sympathies? Or will they remain brave, single and true; refuse to bow before shadows and worship phrases; sensible of the greatness of their position recognise the greatness of their duties; denounce to a perplexed and disheartened world the frigid theories of

a generalizing age that have destroyed the individuality of man; and restore the happiness of their country by believing in their own energies, and daring to be great!

THE END.

LONDON:
Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.